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PASTOR'S SKETCHES.

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# PASTOR'S SKETCHES :

OR,

## Conversations with Anxious Inquirers

RESPECTING

# THE WAY OF SALVATION.

BY

ICHABOD S. SPENCER, D.D.

PASTOR OF SECOND PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, BROOKLYN, N. Y.

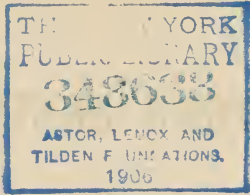
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'Ο λόγος αὐτῆς τοῦ ἀρνίου.  
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SIXTH EDITION.

NEW YORK:  
PUBLISHED BY M. W. DODD,  
BRICK CHURCH CHAPEL, CITY HALL SQUARE,  
(OPPOSITE THE CITY HALL.)

1851.

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## P R E F A C E .

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THIS is a book of truth. These Sketches are taken from real life. They are facts, not fancies. They are the experiences of some whom the Author has known in the course of his ministry. He has not given to them an item of coloring. The only thing about them, from which any erroneous impression can possibly arise, is to be found in the fact, that they are *only* sketches, not containing all that could be given, in respect to the individuals here mentioned. But they are believed to contain a fair and sufficiently full representation of each case.

The Author has made this selection from the materials in his possession, on the principle of avoiding useless repetitions as much as possible, and on the principle of meeting some of the strange difficulties, which sometimes trouble inquirers after salvation.

If this humble volume shall fall into the hands of any, who recognize their own portrait among the sketches here drawn ; the Author would affectionately suggest to them the propriety of permitting that fact to remain un-

known. He solicits this as a special favor to himself; while he assures them, he would deem it an injustice and a breach of confidence, to disclose to other people the particular feelings of individuals, made known to him in the sacredness of religious intimacy. He has been careful not to write anything here, which can injure the feelings of any living person. It must be by the person's own act, not the Author's, if any one of the portraits here sketched is ever known to the public, as that of any particular individual.

The most of the instances here mentioned occurred in revivals of religion; but the Author would be sorry to have it thought, that he has any preference for the piety commencing at such a time, before that which commences at other seasons. He would also be sorry to be at all instrumental in leading any soul to think, that salvation is not as certainly and as easily attainable at any other time, as during a revival, if the soul will as diligently seek it. It would still more grieve him, to do anything towards fostering those spurious excitements, so often *called* revivals, which have done so much to distract the churches and corrupt the religion of this country. He has no fear of any excitements, which divine truth will produce; and he believes, that, if the *truth* has produced them, they will be ready and willing to be *controlled* by the truth, come from what lips it may; and will not, therefore, induce the people to rely upon some particular *men*, "Revival Preachers," as they are



sometimes called. He would not undervalue revivals of religion, because abuses have sometimes crept into the churches under that name ; nor would he dare to think of choosing the mode, in which the Holy Spirit shall do his own blessed work.

The particular religious experiences of individuals are not guides for other people. They are only illustrations of divine truth, by its application. The Sacred Scriptures are the only just guide. Still, religious history and religious biography, though often abused, by an over-trusting, and by a misguided taste, have some signal advantages, and, fitly used, may be of peculiar benefit. It should be carefully remembered, that such biographies are written for the very reason, that they are supposed to contain something uncommon ; and therefore cannot be applicable, as examples, to believers, or inquirers in every case. Nobody would ever think of publishing the religious experience of every believer in a church or city.

But the Author has hoped, that these Sketches might be useful, not on the ground of their marvelousness, so much as on the ground of their applicability, as they refer to common experiences and common difficulties, which have occurred under the ordinary ministration of a very humble individual ; and are, therefore, likely to occur again. He has hoped, that they might be instructive, by showing the application of divine truth to human hearts—by leading some anxious inquirers after salvation to see what it is that hinders them from peace with God—and

by leading private Christians and young Ministers of the gospel to study more carefully what they shall say to those, who inquire what they shall do to be saved. Twenty years ago, he would have valued a book like this, above all price. And if this, by the divine blessing, shall be of any assistance to young Ministers, on a very delicate and important part of their duty, or of any assistance to inquirers after salvation, its purpose will be accomplished.

BROOKLYN, N. Y., *August*, 1850.

## THE YOUNG IRISHMAN



ON a very hot day in July, a boy called at my house with a gentleman's card, saying that a lady had sent him to request me to visit a young man, who was sick. Both the lady and the young man were strangers to me. I had never heard of either of them. They resided more than three miles from me, in another city; and as I understood, the lady was an attendant upon the ministry of another clergyman who was absent from home. I could not learn from the boy, why she should have sent for *me*. I was very much occupied, the day was intensely hot, the place was distant, many other clergymen were more convenient to it; and I felt disposed, for these reasons, to excuse myself from going. As I was considering the matter, the boy, as if reading my thoughts, spoke out earnestly, "She said you *must* come."

I went, though I felt it to be a hardship.

Finding the street and the number of the house, by the card which was sent to me; I rang the bell, and inquired for the young man, whose name was on the card. I was shown to his room. He was seated in an easy chair, with a book in his hand, and appeared somewhat pale and feeble, but not very sick. He rose to receive me. I told him who I was, and that the boy who brought me his card, said he was sick, and would be glad to see me. He made no reply, except to offer me his hand and ask me to be seated. We had some general conversation, in which he took the lead. But he said nothing about his sending for me. Aside from his paleness and an occasional cough, I saw nothing in him to indicate the presence of any disease. He told me something of his history. He was a young Irishman about twenty-six years of age, was educated in one of the European Colleges, had studied law in Ireland, and designing to enter the legal profession in this country, had been engaged in its studies here about two years. He was a man of dignified appearance, of very handsome address, fluent in conversation, perfectly easy in his manners, and evidently of a vivid mind. He had seen much of the world, and told me he was fond of society. But for the last six months, since his health began to decline, he had been very much secluded, according to the advice of his physician. Said he, "I have

been obliged to exchange the society of living men for the society of dead men, and was just amusing myself with reading Tacitus' *De Moribus Germanorum*, when you came in." He manifested no disposition to advert to the subject of my visit. On the contrary, he seemed to avoid it. He so often changed the subject of conversation, when I attempted to introduce it, that I was compelled to ask him plainly, if he desired to see me for any particular reason. He was silent for a moment, apparently lost in thought, and then replied:—

“It would certainly *seem* very impolite in me, to say I did *not* wish to see you, since you have taken pains to come so far through the dust and heat; but I think it would be *really* impolite in me, not to tell you exactly the truth. I have an old aunt, who is a very religious woman; and she has been urging me to send for you, almost ever since I have been secluded here. She thinks I am not to live long, and has talked to me often on the subject of religion. But as she and I could not think alike, she insisted that I ought to converse with some minister of the gospel, and finally became so urgent, that I reluctantly consented. But you will allow me to say, that I should have had no reluctance at all, at all, if I had supposed she was going to lead me to form so agreeable an acquaintance.”

“I am happy to know you,” said I, “and am glad it was in my power to obey your call.”

“It was *she* that *called*,” said he. “When I consented to see a clergyman, I left the selection and all the preliminaries entirely to her, and she selected yourself. I told her the selection lay in her line, as she was religious and I was not; and that I should judge of religion, very much by the specimen of a minister she sent to me.”

I answered, “I must take care, then, how I demean myself, if you are going to rest your opinion of religion on that ground. And I suppose, in equity, you will allow *me* to judge of the science of Law in the same manner.”

“Ah!” said he, “I shall be obliged to fling in a demurrer on that point. I should be sorry to have you form your opinion of the law, by such a specimen of the legal profession as myself.”

“Your demurrer certainly cannot avail anything in your favor,” said I. “If it can come in at all, it will be easy to turn it against you. For, since religion is a much higher matter than law, it is not to be demanded, that a *man* should be as good a representative of it, as a man should be of law; and if you demur at my forming an opinion of

law by the impression I have about one of its disciples, *much more*, may I demur at your forming an opinion of religion on that ground."

"Well, indeed," said he, "I cannot respond to that. You have floored me, the first onset. But are you not a lawyer? Your pleading indicates as much."

"Not at all. I am only a very ordinary minister.—But since your aunt has done me the honor to send for me, I should be happy to form her acquaintance. Does she reside here?"

"No. She lives a little distance off. I must tell you, she is very retiring, and lives very much secluded, though she spends much of her time with me; and I doubt whether she will allow you to see her at all. She is not so young as she used to be. She has been a beautiful woman—an elegant woman; and I tell her, that her *pride* keeps her away from society now, because she is not so handsome as she was once. But she seems to think that idea a reflection upon her religion; and wonders that I can think of such a thing, and cannot have sense and sobriety enough to rise above such trifling thoughts."

"Wherein do she and you differ on the subject of religion?"

"Really, sir, I can scarcely answer that question. We *never* differ, only in a friendly way.

But, though she is a woman of very fine mind, in my opinion, yet her notions are too rigid for me."

"Perhaps she has examined the subject of religion more than you have."

"I have no doubt," said he, "that she has spent more *time* over it. But *my* mind is not so formed as to take things upon *trust*. I want *knowledge*. I am not prepared to yield to assumption and dogmatism."

"I am very glad to hear you say that," said I; "but perhaps you and I should not agree, in respect to your aunt's yielding to assumption and dogmatism. We are not accustomed to do that in religion. I venture to affirm, that your aunt is not guilty of it. And I do this, because *I know*, that we who espouse the cause of religion are not credulous, assuming, or dogmatic; and on the contrary, the rejecters of religion are themselves the *most* credulous, assuming, and dogmatic people amongst us."

"Well, indeed," said he, "you have fairly flung down the gauntlet to me."

"Not at all. *You* flung it down at the name of your aunt; and I, as her champion, take it up. I am prepared for the contest, the very moment you will name any definite matter of disagreement betwixt yourself and her."

"I must give you the credit for no small



gallantry," said he. "Your chivalry is of high bearing indeed, if you will so readily espouse the part of a lady entirely a stranger to you, and are prepared to defend her opinions, when you do not even know them."

"I risk nothing, however," said I. "And I am prepared to contest the point you named, or any other point. You mentioned her taking things upon trust—her yielding to dogmatism and assumption."

"Yes, I did. But I did not mean her in particular. I mean religionists in general."

"So I supposed. And I now ask you what it is, that we take upon trust, or assume, or wherein we dogmatize, any more than you lawyers dogmatize."

"Well, to tell you the truth, I had reference to what my aunt is constantly saying about God. She seems to me to assume his existence, and character, and government over us. I tell her, that *I want knowledge*."

"Very well," said I; "that is a definite point. Let us get it fixed clearly in mind, and then bring it before the bar of our reason. The question is this:—Is the existence, is the character, is the government of God *known* to us? are these things matters of *knowledge*? I affirm, (in your aunt's behalf,) they are. You deny it."

"Right," said he. "That is the question."

And as you are the plaintiff, you must open the case. Yours is the affirmative. Bring on your witnesses. I have only to deny, and to show that your proofs are insufficient."

"Very well," said I. "We are agreed so far. I commence the argument.—The matter before us regards *knowledge*.—I have, therefore, a preliminary question to settle first; and I think it may be settled amicably betwixt us, without any debate. I now put the question to you—*What is knowledge?*"

"You have taken me by surprise," said he, (a little confused, and hesitating.)

"Certainly," said I, "the question is a fair one; and it belongs to *you* to answer it. It is *you* who complain of your aunt, that she has not *knowledge*, on a particular subject, to which she urges you to attend. We are to examine the question; and therefore, we ought to know what we are talking about, so as to understand one another. You say, you 'want knowledge;' and I ask, what do you mean by knowledge? I only give you a fair opportunity to explain your own word."

"Why, sir," said he, (with a forced smile,) "I venture to say, that you and I employ that very common word, in the same sense."

"I beg pardon," said I. "In our profession we do not allow any *assumptions*: we take nothing *upon trust*: we never *dogmatize*."

He laughed quite heartily at this; and replied, "I believe I have been away from court too long. My wit is not keen enough for this contest just now. You have floored me again."

"Oh," said I, "your wit is not at fault, but your *assumption*, your taking things *upon trust*, your *dogmatism*."

"Well," said he, "since I own up on this point, you will do me the favor to answer the question yourself. I will assent to the answer, if I can without injuring my cause."

"Most willingly," said I. "But this is a serious and momentous subject. It is the *most* momentous of anything on this side of death. Let us then deal with it, in a careful and candid manner."

"I will," said he, "most certainly."

Said I, "Knowledge is founded on certainty. Something must be certain, or it cannot be known. Knowledge is the cognizance, which the mind has of realities, of facts, of some certainty or truth. It exists in the mind. The realities may exist outside of the mind, or inside of it. But they exist *first*; and when the mind makes an ascertainment of them, it gains *knowledge*. That ascertainment is made, by what we call proofs or evidences. And these evidences will vary, as the subjects of knowledge or the certainties vary. There is one sort of proofs for mathematical knowledge, and another sort for legal knowledge,

and another for historic knowledge ; but each is good in its place, and sufficient. You would not expect me to prove a truth in morals or history, by mathematical demonstration;—or a truth about the soul, by the evidences of eyes which cannot see it;—or a truth about the invisible God, by the authority of a law-book, such as Blackstone, or Starkie, or Vattel. But whatever evidences or proofs do, fitly, justly, convince a reasonable understanding ; furnish that understanding with knowledge ; because they enable it to ascertain a reality, a certainty, so that the conviction of the mind accords with the fact.—That is what I call knowledge. Do you assent to the explanation ?”

He replied, “ I have no fault to find with it. And if the whole of religion was as clear and certain as that, I should not reject it.”

“ The whole of it *is* as clear and certain as that, whatever you may think about it.”

“ But,” said he, “ how do you apply your explanation to the existence of God ? What are the evidences of his existence ?”

“ There are numerous evidences, sir, and fit ones. Your own existence is one of them, and not a minor one. You are an effect. There is a cause somewhere, adequate to the production of such an effect. That cause, whatever it be, is God. You did not make yourself. Your parents, your ancestors, however far back you trace them, were

not self-created. Your own mind assigns a cause somewhere, an original cause, and that cause is God. And you are just as certain, that there is such a God, as you are, that you are yourself an effect. You *know* it just as well; not in the same way; but yet, just as certainly. And you know you are an effect of an intelligent cause. Your common sense will not allow you to believe, that you and all your ancestors sprang from accident, from chance. You do not find chance operating in such a way. You do not fling dust in the air, and find it come down, a man or a monkey. If you should find anywhere a machine, a living or dead one, which had in it a tenth part as many manifestations of intention, and power, and skill, as your own mortal body; you could not avoid believing, that some mind had contrived it, and some power beyond itself had brought it into existence. You would know it, as well as you know anything. The perfect proof is before you. And your own living body and thinking mind are perfect proofs of the existence, power and wisdom, of God.—There is no assumption or dogmatism in this. It is only cool and certain reasoning, which conducts to an inevitable conclusion, and the conclusion is knowledge.

“On the same principle, the whole universe and its living inhabitants, rational and irrational—its suns and comets, its whales and butterflies, its

motes and mountains, are proofs of the existence and power of God. And every change, every motion in the universe is an evidence which speaks for him. Our reason tells us, they are not uncaused. The cause is God."

To all this, the young man listened with the most fixed attention. He seemed to drink in every word. I thought his attention had fatigued him; but he said, not at all, he loved to think. "But," said he, "you have led me into a new world of thinking. Your positions are very bold; and before I come to any conclusion, I must review the matter in my own mind."

"Shall I call on you to-morrow?" said I.

He answered, "I can scarcely ask it or expect it of you; but if it is not too much trouble, I should like to see you again. You need not be afraid of wearying me. I can study or talk all day."

The next day I called again. He appeared glad to see me, and immediately began to speak of our interview the day before. Said he, "Your bold position yesterday startled me. I have been thinking of your argument ever since. I cannot overthrow it. That idea about a change or a motion being an effect, and the human mind assigning a cause to it, and our having knowledge on that ground, was new to me. But I find much that men call knowledge rests precisely on that

ground. And yet, I am not fully satisfied. I have been accustomed to think, that the existence of God was at least doubtful, that the proofs of it were very obscure, and when you brought up my own existence as a proof, it startled me. I have often said to my aunt, that we know very little about spirit,—that we can understand matter, but spirit lies very much beyond our knowledge; it is all a mystery to us. And now, though I dare not assail your position, or your arguments, still it does seem to me, that I have a degree of knowledge and certainty about *bodies*, that I cannot have about *spirit*; and I should like to hear what you can say on that point."

"I say that it is a mere impression," said I; "a common one indeed, but an erroneous one. There may be some faint apology for it. The most, if not all, of our primary ideas reach our mind through the inlet of the senses; and therefore, when such an idea as that of spirit is presented to us,—spirit, a thing which we cannot see, cannot hear, cannot touch, cannot bring within the immediate cognizance of any of our bodily senses; the idea appears to lie beyond the grasp of the mind, hung round with a deep, and misty, and mysterious obscurity. If eyes could see it, or hands could handle it, men would have none of this seeming uncertainty, and doubt. But since they cannot, and since the idea of spirit must

come to them through some other channel, for example, by comparison, by reasoning, by tracing effect to cause, or some such device; the whole doctrine of spirit assumes to them a kind of dim and misty significance, too much like an airy fancy, or unsubstantial dream. That is just the state of your mind at the present moment. The seeming uncertainty is not a real uncertainty, it is only an impression; and that is the reason why you dare not assail my argument of yesterday. Your *reason* perceives its truth, but your impression and your prejudice are against it.

“And since I am on this point now, I will pursue it, if you please, a little farther.—From the necessity of our nature, while here in the body, the most of us are more conversant with sensible objects, than spiritual ones. We employ, from morning till night, our sensitive organism in our ordinary occupation. We gain most of our knowledge itself in that mode; and hence, when we turn to ideas of immateriality, we come into a new field, where we are almost strangers, and cannot therefore feel, as if we were among the familiar and well-known realities and certainties of home.”

He replied to this, “Do you mean to affirm, then, that human knowledge in respect to spirit is as clear and certain, as in respect to material things?”



“Certainly, sir; I mean to affirm just that; and I maintain, that the idea of the imperfection of our knowledge about spirit is all a mere impression and mere prejudice. The mind has taken an untenable position, and has espoused a falsehood, when men declare, ‘we know little about spirit,—we can understand what matter is, but spirit is beyond our comprehension.’”

“Have you been talking with my aunt?” says he.

“No, sir; I have not seen her; though I should like to, very much.”

“I thought you had,” says he; “for I have made that affirmation, (which you just condemned,) to her a thousand times; and I thought she had told you.”

“I cannot help it,” said I. “My position is taken, and I cannot retract. Unless you will retract your affirmation, I shall be compelled to show its falsity.”

“I am not prepared to retract it at all,” said he; “and if you have boldness enough to attempt to show its falsity, I am sure you do not lack courage; and if I am not asking too much of you, I assure you I should be greatly pleased to hear what you have to say.”

“Well, then,” said I, “we are at issue, and I have much to say, perhaps more than you have strength to hear.”

Said he, "I am not wearied at all. You need have no fear. I told you I love to think, and you delight me by setting me to thinking."

"Then," said I, "I will enter upon the matter.—And in the outset, I admit, that our knowledge about matter comes in such a *mode*, that that knowledge has a vividness, and often an impressiveness, which belongs to no knowledge gained in another way. We have a sensible organism, which brings us into contact with matter. Our nerves are affected by it. And through that machinery, sensitive as it is inexplicable, we have impressions as well as knowledge, and have an instant certainty, which requires no slow and cool processes of reflection, or examination of evidences. We see the sun; and that is enough: the moment we have the sight, we have the knowledge. We hear the thunder; and that is enough: the moment we hear, that moment we have the knowledge. We need not any other examination.

"Now this sensitive machinery, and the instant rapidity and suddenness with which it acts, give to the knowledge which we gain in this way, a vividness, an impressiveness and force. But is not that all? Have we any greater certainty about things seen, and things heard, and things handled, than we have about things reasoned and demonstrated? How is this? Can we trust the mechanism of our nerves, any better than we can

trust the multiplication table, or the mathematical processes of astronomy and the counting-house? any easier than we can trust the deep philosophy of law? Indeed, is it not *more* probable, that some derangement should come in, among the mechanism of the senses, and make us see wrong, or hear wrong, or taste wrong, than that the sure processes of mathematical calculation should deceive us? In our knowledge derived through the senses, we can employ only our own processes: nobody else can use our nerves of sight, or hearing, or taste. But in our knowledge derived through mathematics, and in some other modes, we employ the same processes which others have employed before us, and are employing all around us; and we can therefore fortify our own conclusions by theirs, and substantiate our certainty in knowledge, (if need be,) by a comparison of calculations. *Their* processes, by which they obtained their knowledge, their certainty, we can make *our* processes; but we cannot use another man's eyes or ears, or the nervous mechanism by which they act. All we can do, is to take the testimony of the men who do use them; and then, our knowledge rests only on testimony, not on the senses. And because we are confined to our own machinery of sense, and cannot employ another man's machine; we have *not*, herein, one of the advantages for certainty, which attend

knowledge in mathematics, and all other matters of reasoning. We can employ for our assurance, another man's reasoning powers, but his eyes are his own, and we cannot use them. We can add the *testimony* of one man to that of another man, and then add another, and make them all auxiliary to our own, for heightening our assurance and certainty in knowledge; but we can do nothing of this in the knowledge derived from the senses—we cannot borrow another man's nerves. And it follows from all this surely, that, instead of there being *more* ground of certainty in knowledge derived directly through the senses, there is *less* certainty than in knowledge that comes in some other modes."

"Why," said he, interrupting me, "you do not intend to say that our knowledge is *doubtful*, when we see and hear?"

"Not exactly that," said I. "But I am comparing different grounds of knowledge. And I admit, that sensible knowledge is the more *impressive*, by reason, first, of its nervous machinery, and second, of its instant suddenness. It comes to the mind at once. It makes its impression at a dash. We have no time to get cool, or keep cool, as we have in the slower business of reasoning out our knowledge. But if this superior impressiveness is not all—if it is thought, that there is really any superior *certainty* attending what is

known by the senses, let any man attempt to tell what that certainty is, or where it lies. He cannot tell. He can tell nothing about it. Indeed, he can *conceive* nothing about it. The thing defies conjecture.—I can tell, why I believe my eyes, sooner than I believe the testimony of an unknown witness before me. I have known men testify falsely, oftener than I have known my eyes testify falsely; and therefore, I have the more certainty about my eyes. And I would *not* have the more certainty, if I could not tell why. And if my neighbor cannot tell why his knowledge derived through the senses has more *certainty* about it, than knowledge coming in some other way, though he believes it has, then I must beg leave to think him a very imperfect man; and though I might trust his eyes, I would not trust his powers of reasoning. The truth is, it is a mere prejudice, when men think, that they can know by the senses any more certainly, than in other ways. There is a vividness and impressiveness in knowledge gained through the senses, and this freshness and strength is mistaken for an additional degree of certainty. The idea, then, so common among men, that the senses are the surest means of *certainty*, is all false. We can be equally certain on other grounds. It is not true, that while we have clear knowledge of matter, we have only doubtful knowledge of spirit,

because spirit does not come within the cognizance of the senses. That notion has just mistaken vividness of impression for strength of proof; and ‘*assumes*’ what is not true, that other kinds of evidence are not equal to the evidence of the senses—that we cannot *know*, because we have not seen.”

“Why,” said he, “if my aunt were here now, she would rejoice over me. I have silenced her many a time by saying to her, if I could *see* God I would believe in him.”

“You are not alone in that,” I answered. “Many have said it. But if it means anything, it is only a miserable *assumption*, a pitiful *dogmatism*. It *assumes*, that there is a just suspicion resting upon all evidence, except that of sense. It assumes too much. How far does this doubt about spirit intend to go? what is precisely its ground? If its ground is at all definable it is this, namely, that a degree of uncertainty attaches to all matters not evinced to us by our own senses. This is implied in the very language which men employ. They say, ‘if my eyes could see it, if my hands could handle it, I should know. But I cannot see or touch spirit.’ Well now, if we can *know* nothing but sensible objects, our knowledge will be extremely limited. Does this man *know* that he has got a soul? He never saw it—he never handled it—he cannot taste it. Does he

know that he has reason, or the power of reasoning, or any mind at all? He cannot *see* his mind, or touch it. How, then, on his own principles, can he certainly know that he has got any? Where will his doubting end? He is bound to doubt whether he has a soul,—whether he has an imagination, a memory, a faculty of reason. Indeed, he is bound to doubt whether he has the power of doubting; because, he never saw it, or touched it, tasted it, or heard it speak. So that his principle of doubting about spirit, if he will only be self-consistent, will cut him off from all that he calls certain knowledge, except merely on the field of matter, and indeed that *part* of the field, which lies within the reach of his fingers, his ears, or his eyes. On his own principles, he cannot certainly know anything more.—Just in this absurdity lies every man who exclaims, ‘we cannot know much about spirit,—we are certain about matter, because our senses can reach it.’”

My young friend appeared to be surprised. Said he, “You seem to be fond of turning the tables upon me. You make out, that the sin of assumption is more mine, than my aunt’s.”

“So it is,” said I.

“Well,” said he, (very thoughtfully and gravely,) “I believe it is, after all! I think I shall have to go to her to confession.”

“I hope you will confess to God, also,” said I;

“for your sin of assumption was more odious to him than to her.”

“But I have not done with the charge. There is another item in this count. There is another false assumption in the notion which I am combating. Your notion is, that we can have a certainty of knowledge about matter, such as we cannot have about spirit; because our senses furnish evidence of matter, but not of spirit. This is a mere assumption, and a falsehood. Have you *no sensible evidences* of spirit? When you move your tongue, and utter your arguments, are not the motion and the arguments any evidences of an unseen mind? They are *sensible evidences* of something to me; for I see the motion, and I hear the arguments. And will you tell me, that the *matter* of the tongue, the mere material of it, moves of its own accord, and weaves the arguments by its own power? If not, then the motion I see, and the arguments I hear, are sensible evidences of the existence of an unseen spirit, which prompts the motion and weaves the arguments. Though my senses do not *directly* reach the spirit itself, yet they do reach the effects of that spirit, (—the motion of the tongue and the audible arguments,) which come from the unseen mind. And thus my very senses do furnish me with an evidence of the existence of that mind, as clear and certain as if my eyes could behold it.



They do behold the effects of it—the traces of it—the signals of it, as clearly as they behold anything. The signals, the traces, the effects, cannot come from any other quarter. They must come from mind. A reasonable argument must be a production of reason. And just as certainly as I hear it coming from human lips, just so certainly I have the evidence of two of my senses, that a mind exists somewhere, a spirit which has moved the lips, and contrived the argument.—It is, therefore, an *assumption* and a falsehood, when one says he has no sensible evidences of spirit, and hence cannot know much about it.”

The attention of my Irish friend was intently fixed on every word I had uttered. And when I paused, he remained silent for some minutes. At length he said to me :—

“ You have convinced me of one thing, at least. I perceive that I have often taken false ground. And yet, though I am not prepared to controvert your position, and it seems to me that your argument is unassailable ; still, the manner in which you reason from effect to cause may have some error in it. At least, it is so new to me, that I am at a loss, though it all seems perfectly clear. Are we certain, after all, about causes and effects.”

“ Yes ; just as certain as we are of anything. There may be unfathomable mysteries somewhere

in the subject, just as there are in every other subject; but I have had nothing to do with *them*. I have only employed the plain principle of common sense,—that effects, changes, motions, must have some cause. Did your question mean to inquire whether that principle is certain?”

He sat in silence for a long time. I did not think it best to interfere with his thoughts. I took up one of his books, and retired to the window, to await the result of his cogitations. He paced the floor, back and forth, for a full half hour, manifestly in profound meditation. Finally, stopping before me, he said:—

“What *is* a cause?”

“That which produces the effect,” said I;—  
“an antecedent, without which the effect would not exist.”

“Is it *certain*,” said he, “that there is a fixed connection betwixt the two?”

“Yes: *you* are certain of it, or you would not ask that question, or any other. You speak to me to produce an effect; and speaking, you know, you are the *designing* cause. You employ this principle in every action of your life. You *cannot* act without it. You never did, and you never will. You cannot utter a word, or make a motion on any other principle, if you try.”

He made another long pause. And as he walked the room, I went on reading my book. But

finally, I laid aside the book, and took my hat, to depart, saying to him, that I would not have made my visit so long, if his residence had been more convenient for me to reach.

“I *must* see you again,” said he. “Can you give your company an hour or two to-morrow?”

“Not to-morrow,” said I; “but I will see you the next day, if you please.”

“Well, now do not disappoint me,” said he. “I am sorry to trouble you, and I feel more grateful to you than I can express; but I cannot rest our subject here, and I am afraid I could not manage it alone. I have been a sceptic on religion for eight years; and if left alone, I am afraid my old sceptical notions would return upon me.”

As I called upon him two days after, he immediately told me, that there were two points which he wanted cleared up. He had been studying the subject ever since I left him; and acknowledged, that his mind was convinced, as far as I had gone. He “believed all my positions were impregnable.”

“But,” said he, “your affair of cause and effect which you brought to bear upon me, like a battery—wherein does the efficient *power* of the *cause* lie?”

“In the will that wields it, sir.”

“What! in *the will*?”

“Yes, sir, just in the will.”

“I am confounded! What will come next?”

“Your own conviction of truth, sir, will come very soon; and the entire abandonment of your sceptical infidelity.”

“*I believe it,*” said he, very solemnly. “But you surprise me by saying, that power lies in will.”

“Just in will, sir,” said I; “nowhere else. This presides over the whole field of causes and effects. It belongs to the very nature of the human mind, to attribute *any change* which we behold, to *something*. That something we denominate the cause. It may not be itself the cause, only instrumentally, unless it is the will; and when it is *not* the will, then we must trace our way back through the instruments, till we reach the real seat of power; and we shall always find that to be the will. My motions, my speech, my walking, are changes, and no sane man supposes them to be *uncaused*. Everybody supposes them, knows them, to proceed from some cause adequate to the production of the changes. This is common sense; and on this principle every language on earth is formed. The principle is interwoven with the structure of the Greek, the Latin, the French, the Chinese, with every tongue. No man’s mind rejects this principle. If anybody thinks changes to be uncaused, he is a madman or a fool. Common sense always knows, that changes are the

*effects* of some *cause*, which holds power over them. That cause, in respect to my motions, is my spirit. My motions are *an effect*. My spirit is the cause. The cause of all the changes in the universe is God. All these changes are effects coming from something, and that something (whatever it be,) is God. He is the great *first* cause of all things. But he has delegated to me a little power, (for a time,) over a few particles of matter, which I call my body; and by the exercise of that power, I can move. My agency is only a subordinate agency, limited, and not lasting. It may last till I die, but no longer; and then I must account for my stewardship. It extends only to my own flesh. I cannot make a stone or a clod of earth move, by my willing it, as I can move my material frame. And, dependent creature that I am, I cannot move my material frame, except by the mysterious power of my spirit, which *wills* it,—a power not my own, in the sense of independency, but only in the sense of subordination. But in this subordinate sense, *I* am the cause of my own actions, and accountable for them,—sometimes to men, and always to God.

“Now, just on this ground of common sense, my motions are all evidences of the existence of my spirit, which has power over them; and the great motions of the universe are all evidences of an unseen Spirit, which has power over them.

That unseen Spirit is God. These changes of the universe are visible. Our senses take note of them; and therefore our senses, though they cannot directly reach the Divine Being, *can* reach, and reach *everywhere*, those changes which are his effects, and demonstrations of his existence and mighty power.—This argument is rock. There is no getting away from it. These changes of the universe *are* effects, by the common consent of all mankind. Being so, they must have a cause: they demonstrate the existence of a cause. And whatever that cause be, it is God. Our senses come in contact with the effects;—and now, who shall maintain, that we have not as good evidences about God, as if our eyes could behold him? It may be less sudden, less startling, and hence less impressive evidence; but is it not as good? May I not be as *certain* as if I saw him? Do not I *know*, that a cause of visible changes is operating, just as well as I know the effects which I behold. If there is any uncertainty about my knowledge of God in this way of knowing, let any man attempt to tell where it lies. He cannot tell.—The changes? my eyes see them. I therefore know them by evidences of sense. They are effects. I know this by my common sense, and the common sense of every man around me. And the *cause* of these effects, you must either allow to be the Deity, or you

must maintain, that dumb matter, mere dirt and rock, has reason, and will, and power of motion, of its own.—And coming in contact with these effects constantly, as I do, I certainly am unable to perceive, why I do not positively know there is a God, as well as I know there is a sun that moves, or a drop of rain that falls. My knowledge may not be impressive and startling; but is it not real—certain—founded on good and legitimate evidences?

“And now, what *is* power? or, where does it lie? or, what wields it? Where is its seat? its home? Where *does* power originate? There is something which men call power—something which is capable of effecting some change; and the question you put to me is, what is it? or, where is the seat of it? And the answer is, *power lies in the spirit—not in matter, but in spirit.* The power by which all changes in matter are effected, resides immediately in spirit, in mind. The power by which I move a muscle does not belong to the muscle itself. The muscle is only an instrument which obeys that act of my spirit, which I call my *will*. My will is that mysterious thing with which my Maker has invested me, and by which I can move. The will is the power. We cannot move a single atom of matter in the universe without it. It has a *direct* power over our bodies in health, and till we die;

and an indirect power over a little other matter. Acting indirectly, our will can bring our bodies, or some portion of our material frame, into contact with other matter ; and thus we can effect some changes in that other. The stones we lift, the mountains we level, the ships we build, are all lifted, and leveled, and built, by the power of our will. Power resides nowhere but in spirit. You speak of the mechanical powers, and I am not going to find fault with your language. But let not the imperfection of language mislead your understanding,—as it certainly does, if you suppose these mechanical powers have an item of power of their own. They have none. The power exists only in your will. You use them. You bring your hands, or feet, or some other portion of your body into contact with some other matter, the lever, the screw, the pulley ; and thus you *willingly* employ these contrivances to do what you could not do without them. But the lever, the screw, the wedge, the pulley, have not an item of power in themselves. Nobody ever saw them doing anything alone. It is will, it is spirit, which employs them. The will first formed the contrivances themselves ; and could not form them so as to invest them with power to work alone. And the will, in every instance of their operation since they are formed, must come along with its continued power, or they will do noth-



ing,—*can* do nothing. They have no power, because they have no will.—You have, then, this great, universal lesson, *Power resides only in mind: all power exists in spirit, and in spirit only.*

“God’s will is his power. He employs his power directly or indirectly, as he pleases. He can use instruments, or do without them. He has no need of them, as you have. The direct power of your own spirit is limited—it is limited, as I said, to the few particles of matter which make up your mortal body; and if you would move or change anything beyond that, you must contrive some mode to bring your material body into contact or some connection with it. But God, the unseen, eternal Spirit, is able to bring the power of his will to bear directly upon all things,—*as* directly as the power of your will bears upon the body it moves. He has only to will it, and any conceivable change will instantly take place. The power all lies in the Infinite Spirit. God is Spirit. His will is the effect. Nothing intervenes between his volition and the change which follows it, to give any power to the volition itself. The mere volition is all his power.—Awful God! Tremendous Deity! On his simple volition hangs this mighty universe of being! Earth, heaven, hell depend upon it! If he should will it, there would not be an angel in

heaven, or a devil in hell ! existence would cease ! this universe would become a blank ! and nothing would *be*, except ‘ that high and lofty One, who inhabiteth eternity !’—Oh ! who would not have this God for his friend ? Oh ! who could endure to have him his enemy ?—Enemy ? sooner, come annihilation ! Let me perish—let my spirit die—let all these thinking faculties, my soul, go out in eternal night, sooner than have this awful God against me !—It need not be. That God who ‘ spake and it was done,’ who ‘ commanded and it stood fast,’ who said, ‘ let there be light and there was light,’—this God is love. I hear a voice coming from resurrection lips, ‘ all power in heaven and earth is given unto me ; go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature, and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. He that believeth shall be saved—though he were dead, yet he shall live again.’ Blessed words ! blessed Saviour ! Open your heart, sir, to this message. Take this offer. Poor sinner as you are—weak mortal—being of a day, and soon to lie in the dust ; cast your immortal soul upon the power of this Christ, to save you from eternal death, and give you life evermore !”

As I uttered this exhortation with all the force I could give to it, my young friend sunk back upon his chair, with his eyes fixed immovably upon me ; and held his breath, in a sort of agonv

of attention. He turned more pale than I had ever seen him. And when I stopped, he drew a long breath, his eyelids dropped over his eyeballs, and he looked like a corpse.

“I beg your pardon,” said I. “I have talked too long. I have wearied your strength.”

“Not at all,” said he; “but you have conquered me. I see I have been wrong.—But I must think of this more.”

I replied, “I hope you will. And I will see you again in a few days.”

As he had not fixed any time for another visit, and as I wished to leave him some time for reflection, I did not call on him again for two days. As I then entered his room, he said to me :—

“I am glad to see you. And I am glad you have come so early in the morning. You will be able to make me a long visit, I hope. I should have sent for you, but I know I am taking up too much of your time.”

“Oh, no; not at all,” said I. “But have you not gained the victory over your doubts?”

“Partly. I will tell you how it is with me. You recollect I told you about my difficulty. I thought, that nothing about spirit was really certain, as we are certain about material things. And still, some of the same difficulty occurs to me, and often tempts me and troubles me; though I believe all you have said about God’s

existence and will, and about cause and effect. When I attempt to pray, the idea will come up to me, that I have not such a certain knowledge about God, and about my own spirit, as I have about objects of sense. My knowledge about spirit seems to me to be inferior. Can you relieve me from this trouble?"

"Probably not," said I. "This matter is not a truth, but what you have just called it, a temptation. And I cannot chain the devil, or check the evil suggestions of your own heart. What I have already said to you, I did suppose to be sufficient on that point, so far as the mind is concerned. If you are *tempted*, your hope lies in prayer."

"But yet," said he, "I do think, that material objects assail the mind, as mental or spiritual ideas do not; and I think that we have a more *extensive* knowledge of matter, than we can have of spirit. And hence, I feel that I am not on *as sure ground* in the abstract and spiritual matters of religion, as I wish to be."

"We are at issue again," said I, "if that is the case."

He replied, "I know that very well. And I half know that I am wrong. But I cannot get my mind clear, on these points."

"I think you can," said I. "And at the risk of some little repetition, (which indeed seems to be needful to you,) I join issue with you again."

“You speak of knowledge. And you want to be *as sure* in religious knowledge, as you feel that you are in other matters; and you want your knowledge to be *as extensive*. You affirm, that that there is, after all, a deficiency on these points. I affirm there is not.”

“Exactly that,” he replied.

“Then,” said I, “let us attempt to examine these questions.

“What is it *to know*? Where does knowledge lie? What is that kind of operation, exercise, or experience, which men call knowledge? We want no school metaphysics on this point. Metaphysical fog is not equal to the noon-day clearness of common sense.

“Knowledge is the ascertainment which the mind has of some certainty or reality. It does not make the certainty. That exists before. It is only a recognition of it. That recognition, or sure perception of mind, (call it what you will,) is knowledge.—Knowledge, then, exists in the mind: not in matter, but in mind: not in the matter of your bones, or blood, or muscles, of your eyes that see, or your ears that hear. Knowledge exists only in mind. The mind has a sure perception of some reality, and that is knowledge.”

“Yes,” said he, emphatically.

“This perception,” I continued, “comes indeed in different ways. I perceive some truths by my

eyes ; as when I behold the sun, or admire a rosebud. I perceive other truths by my ears ; as when I leap at the sound of music, or tremble at the thunder. I perceive other truths by my reason ; as when I know that the half of any substance is not as much as the whole, or that two men are stronger than one, if all three are equals. But in all cases, the perception is in the mind : the ascertainment of the certainty, *the knowledge*, exists in the mind, and nowhere else."

" Yes," said he.

" Now, therefore, if any man knows he has knowledge, he knows he has *mind*. And he knows another thing about it,—he knows it is a *knowing* mind, a spirit capable of knowing, of perceiving truth. And what, then, does the man mean, when he pretends he knows little about mind ? about spirit ? He cannot know anything about matter, *without* knowing something about spirit. It is his spirit only that *knows*. He does not know with his hands, or his feet, or his eyes. He knows only with his mind. And if he knows that rock is hard, or night dark, or water fluid, he *equally* knows, that he himself possesses a perceiving, knowing mind—a reasonable spirit within him, capable of being affected by a reality."

" Yes," said he, (as if he would fix it in mind.)

" But he is certain of these things. He says he is. He feels the hard rock—he sees water run

—his eyes tell him it is dark in the night. But where lies his certainty? Why, he is just certain of his own *mind*,—that is all. He is just certain, that he has got a mind *to be* certain—that he has a perceiving spirit within him, capable of knowing things without him; knowing, that rock is hard, and water fluid, and night dark. He is therefore reduced just to this,—*he cannot be certain of anything at all, without being certain of mind*—certain that he possesses a spirit capable of perceiving and knowing.”

“*That is true*,” said he, most emphatically.

“Does he not, then, learn to know spirit as fast as he learns to know matter? Can he stretch out his fingers anywhere upon a tangible universe, and take a lesson upon it; and not *therewith*, take a lesson upon the spirit, which *alone* perceives its tangibility? Can he open his eyes, amid the flowers of his beautiful garden, and admire the sweet pencillings which delight him, and not, at the same moment, just as well know, that he himself has a spirit capable of admiration and delight, as he knows the hues of beauty which are blending into one another? Can he listen to the wild-bird’s song, and the forest-echo which repeats it, and not just as well know, that he himself has a spirit within him susceptible of the sweets of music and the soothing of its melting echoes, as he knows, that his feathered friend

upon the wing has a mellow throat and an exultant song? This man, this very man, who deplores his uncertainty about spirit, *cannot himself take a single step in the knowledge of matter, without, at the same moment, taking a step in the knowledge of spirit.* Every new lesson he learns about material things which affect his senses, is a new lesson about the immaterial spirit which *learns* it. He cannot know a single quality in matter, without knowing a quality in spirit; for mind only has knowledge. He knows *with* his spirit. And if he is sure of anything, he must be sure of the spirit which has the surety."

"Yes," said he. "I now admit all that. I confess that I cannot have any certainty about matter, unattended by an equal certainty about mind. But here is my trouble:—the surety in reference to matter comes into the mind through the channel of the senses. The organic structure is affected—the nerves of seeing, hearing, feeling, tasting, or smelling. And therefore, is not the knowledge about spirit inferior to this; because it is a kind of knowledge, that does not affect this organic structure?"

"How *can* it be inferior?" said I. "Knowledge exists in mind. Is it any matter how it got there? If it is there, and is knowledge, what matter is it, whether it got in by one channel or another? If our houses are light, is not the light



which comes through the open doors as trustworthy a reality, as that which is transmitted through the glass of the windows? Knowledge is knowledge, no matter how it comes. Certainty is certainty. If it comes through our sensitive organism, it is knowledge. If it comes by consciousness or reason, it is knowledge. And the idea, that all knowledge which comes through our sensitive organism is genuine and sure, while all other must lie under a suspicion of being counterfeit or unsafe; is an idea which would overthrow more than half the science, and more than half the jurisprudence of all mankind. Nobody acts upon it. Nobody ever did, or ever will, except simply in the matter of religion, when depraved men wish to cast off its obligations. There is not a human being to be found, who ever resorts to this idea of the inferiority of all but sensible knowledge, except when error suits his heart better than truth—when he is blinded by the love of sin—when he dislikes the duties of the gospel, such as prayer, and preparation for a future life.

But more. You spake of the organic structure, and the nerves, and the channel of the senses, as if one could be more sure when his material body is affected, and he learns anything in that way."

Said he, "That is the very point. Speak to that."

"Then think a little farther," said I. "Two

of our most important senses seem very much like an exception, usually. In our seeing and in our hearing, the organ that sees and the organ that hears are seldom touched so rudely, as to make us sensible at all, that anything has touched it. And yet, this seeing and this hearing, the very senses which come nearest to spirituality, the very senses whose organism is seldom sensible to matter at all;—these are the very senses in which every man has most confidence, and most employs. Every man seems himself to be assured *most*, when in his bodily organs sensibility of impression is *least*.

“But beyond this, and beyond the fact, that it is the mind which sees and feels, and not the mere organs, (which can do nothing alone,) it is not true, that matter alone can affect our material organism, and thus give us *more surety* about itself. Thought, pure thought, affects it also. You may find a merchant, whose mere contemplation of his embarrassed affairs makes him tremble like an aspen leaf. His mind affects his material body, and his mind alone. He is not in jail. The sheriff has not seized him. He is not turned out of his house. His eyes have not seen his ships sink, or his goods burn. But he trembles, and turns pale, and loses his appetite, and grows lean; and all this, from the mere knowledge he has, that he is an irretrievable bankrupt.—And

what will you say to him? Will you bring him your sweet doctrine of uncertainties to comfort him? and cheerfully assure him, that he may be altogether mistaken, that he cannot be *quite sure*, because he has not *seen* his gold sink, or his goods burn, or his debtors run away?—You may find a culprit, whose crimes are known only to himself,—you lawyers know nothing about them,—and yet, under a sense of his guilt he is shaken, as a reed in the wind. His knowledge affects his nerves. ‘A dreadful sound is in his ears.’ He turns pale, and trembles. ‘The sound of the shaken leaf shall chase him.’—And what will you say of such examples? This knowledge—a knowledge apart from the senses—a knowledge existing only in mind, by reflection and consciousness, as really and powerfully affects the material body itself, as any sensible knowledge can do. Yea, more so. ‘The spirit of a man sustaineth his infirmity; but a wounded spirit, who can bear?’ And what will you say now, about the uncertainty of knowledge which does not come by what you called ‘the channel of the senses,’ when these men find their nerves shattered, their muscles trembling, the circulation of their blood deranged, and their whole material frame under the dreadful sway of a thought within them—just a thought? If you cannot believe in the reality and sureness of knowledge, which does not come

*by* matter; you must at least believe in the reality of a knowledge, which makes the whole matter of a man's frame tremble, as if it would shake to pieces. Look at him, and answer;—have you certainty only about matter? have you not equal certainty about mind? Do you not know, that it possesses a dreadful power? that it has capabilities of thought, of apprehension, of agony and torture inconceivable? Do you *not* know, that these are the realities, the certainties, compared with which, all the certainties about matter are a mere dream?"

"Yes," said he; (springing upon his feet, like a well man,) "I *do* know it. I shall never call *that* in question again."

With a contemplative air, he walked a few times across the floor, and then turning suddenly to me, exclaimed very earnestly:—

"But the *extent* of knowledge, sir, the *extent* of knowledge! Our knowledge of spirit is *limited*! We know many things about matter, and only a few about spirit! The *essence* of spirit is unknown to us! We cannot tell what spirit *is*, sir!"

"I venture to affirm you *can* tell what spirit is, just as well as you can tell what matter is. You know just as much about the essence of the one, as you do about the essence of the other.—Be so good as to make a little comparison. Take any

example you will. Here is a rock. It is matter, not spirit. Well, what do you know about it? You know it is hard and heavy, and has figure or shape, and has some kind of color, and it may be, some sort of odor. But what of all that? We are asking about the *essence* of matter, and take the rock for an example. What *is* the essence of it? It has weight. Is its weight the essence? It has shape. Is its shape the essence? It has color. Is its color the essence? It has hardness. Is its hardness the essence of matter? Everybody says, *no, no!* Then, what is its essence? what is that *something*, that substratum, that real existence, in which all these qualities of color, and figure, and weight, and solidity exist?—*No man can tell!*

“Turn then to a spirit. Here, for example, is your own soul—the thing which now attends to my ideas. What is the essence of it? It is spirit—no *matter* at all, about it. Well, what do you know of it? You know, it perceives, it thinks, it remembers, it reasons, it imagines, it fears, it hopes, it resents, it has joy sometimes, and sometimes sorrow. But is joy its essence? or sorrow? or hope? or memory? or hate? or love? or judgment? or thinking? Everybody says, *no, no!* Then, what is its essence? what is that *something*, that substratum, that real existence,

in which all these qualities of thought and feeling exist?—No *man can tell!*

“Sum up the whole rock, then, and the whole soul, and *just confess*, sir, that you know as much about the essence of the one, as you do about the essence of the other. Your knowledge about the essence of matter is just equal to your knowledge about the essence of mind.—What do you mean, then, when you say you know something *surely* about matter, but you know little about spirit? You know, indeed, some qualities of both; and beyond that your knowledge does not extend.”

My young friend had become by this time exceedingly excited. His excitement, which seemed to have been growing upon him for half an hour, had risen, as it seemed, to the highest pitch. His cheek was flushed, his eye sparkled, his frame rose erect, and he paced the room, more with the firm tread of a soldier, than the feeble step of a sick man. Fearing his excitement might do him an injury, I proposed to leave him, and allow him to rest.

“*No, sir!*” said he, (with an accent as if he was angry,) “*no, sir; you are not to leave me yet! You have asked me to confess! And I do confess! I yield this point! Your argument is unanswerable! But, sir, the victory has been all on one side, ever since we commenced these conversations; and I am chagrined, I am deeply mor-*

tified at my defeat! My blood boils in my veins, and all the life there is left in me is aroused, when I perceive you are pushing me farther and farther in the position of a sinner against God, with all my eternity to cry out against me! Do not mistake me, sir. My excitement is not against *you*; it is against *myself*! And I have an inch or two of ground left yet. I say, that you have not answered *all* my objections. I affirmed, that we have a more sure knowledge of material things, than we have of our spirits or any spirit; because we have a more *extensive* knowledge. Our knowledge of spirit is limited.—What do you say to that?”

“I say, that our knowledge of matter is limited also, and the more limited of the two. I say, that we have *more extensive* knowledge of spirit, than we have of matter.”

“Is it possible!” said he. “Go on then. Show it to be so. I will sit down and listen.”

“Another time perhaps you—”

“Do not *mention* another time,” said he, interrupting me. “I may be a dead man, before I see you again! Tell me *now*! Take away, if you can, the last inch of ground I have left; and show me to be without excuse in the sight of that God, in whom you have compelled me to believe, and before whom I must soon stand! I am a dying man. I have no time to lose.”

“Since you desire it,” said I, “let me prove to you, that we know *more things* about spirit, than we do about matter. We know a few qualities in each. Compare them with one another. Make two chapters;—one for the known properties of matter, the other for the known properties of spirit; and then, compare the chapters, and see, of which your knowledge is the most extensive, matter or spirit:—

“*First* chapter: On Matter. You know it has the following qualities, to wit;—weight, color, (sometimes,) figure, inactivity, hardness, smell, (sometimes,) and it is movable. This is about all you know. All else you can say of it, is included in these properties, or results from them.

“*Second* chapter: On Spirit. You know it has the following properties, to wit;—it perceives, it compares, it judges, it reasons, it remembers, it wills, it fancies, it has conscience, it has imagination, it has consciousness or perception of its own acts, it is capable of pain and pleasure. That is enough. You need go no farther. Cut the chapter short. You have *more* knowledge about spirit, than you have about matter—more *extensive* knowledge. You can tell of more properties of spirit, than of matter. Your spirit chapter is longer than your matter chapter. In one word, you do positively know a great deal more about spirit, than you do about matter. Your knowl-



edge of matter is confined to just a few qualities ; but your knowledge of spirit is far *more* extensive, embracing all kinds of operation, all kinds of thought, all kinds of emotions and passions."

" *All true !*" said he. " I confess it. But spirit may have other faculties or properties which we know nothing about."

" So may matter," said I. " So may matter. But that is an idea addressed to our *ignorance*. We are talking about knowledge. What we do *not* know, about spirit or about matter, has nothing to do with our subject, or with our duty. We want *knowledge* to act upon and to die upon. A mere *perhaps*, about something else, does not weigh a feather against known truth. A *perhaps* is bad foothold for a dying man. You would be ashamed of this kind of suggestion in court. Matter and spirit both may have a thousand qualities, which we know nothing about. But we act like fools, if we will not breathe the air, because it may have some unknown properties ;—and we act just as much like fools, if we will not repent and believe in Christ, because our immortal soul may have some unknown properties. Religion asks us to act upon knowledge, upon certainty. Infidelity must always act upon ignorance, if it acts at all. And for that reason, I affirmed to you, the first time I saw you, that infidels are the most credulous, assuming and dogmatic men in the world."

“*That is true,*” said he, (rising suddenly from his seat,) “that is all true.—I have done. I have no more to say. I have been *a fool*, and have groped in the dark all my days! I have spent my life in conjecturing what *might* be, and neglecting what *is*, and what I now *know* is.”

Being quite certain that he was exhausting his strength too much, I entreated him to rest, proposing to call on him again, at any time he should choose.

“Have you seen my aunt to-day?” said he, suddenly.

“No; I have not had that pleasure; but I begin to think I have a kind of *right* to see her.”

“I thought you had seen her. You talk just as she does about my exhausting my strength; and I thought she might have given you a little blarney, to have me receive it second-hand, since I refused it from her.”

“No, I have never seen her.”

“She *ought* to see you. She is a noble woman. You would like her. Her beauty has bidden her good night, long, long ago, but her heart is as green as a shamrock. I love her. My heart will warm towards *her*, after its blood shall be too stiff to move at anything but the thought of her. She has a true Irish heart. There is no English blood in her.”

“Perhaps,” said I, “some of her excellencies

which you admire, may be owing quite as much to Palestine as to Ireland. I can very honestly assure you of my high admiration of the Irish character. When I once heard one of the Judges of the Supreme Court warmly affirm, 'the most noble living creature in the world is a well-educated Irishman,' my whole heart accorded with the declaration of that great man, with no other reserve than the idea, that religion is the crowning excellence of men, after all. But I suppose he had no reference to religion, and I therefore adopted the sentiment as my own.—But now I wish to ask you to discriminate a little, betwixt your aunt's qualities as an Irish woman, (which I have no doubt are great,) and her qualities as a Christian woman. In my opinion, her Christian excellencies, you call Irish excellencies, and, what in her, helps to bind your heart to the Emerald Isle, ought to bind it also to the Saviour she adores. Indeed, I have no hesitation in expressing the opinion, that however admirable she may be as an Irish woman, she is far more admirable as a Christian woman. You ought to do justice to her religion, and feel the force of her character and example. I will venture to affirm for her, that she herself, much as she loves Ireland, will tell you, that she is indebted to the rose of Sharon, more than to the green of the Shamrock. Love Ireland, sir, as much as you will. I have no quarrel with

you on that ground. But do justice, in your estimations, to a heavenly religion, and to what lies nearest to your aunt's own heart. She, I venture to affirm, will lay down all the honors you can heap upon her, at the foot of the cross. It will grieve her, to have you honor her country, and *not* honor her Christ."

Springing suddenly upon his feet, with a look of astonishment and indignation, he stood before me, bending almost over me :—

"You *have seen her*," said he, with an accent of resentment.

"I have *not*," said I, firmly.

"Do you speak *true*?" said he.

"Sir," said I, "my *word* must not be called in question, anywhere."

Said he, "I beg your pardon. Excuse me : I was wrong. But it suddenly occurred to me, that you and my aunt were playing a game with me. I thought she had been telling you all about me."

"What gave you such a suspicion?"

"Because you employed one of her own thoughts ;—that I honored her country and her blood, when I ought to have given the honor to her Redeemer. She has said it to me, the day, sir, and often in past time. But do not look so stern upon me. I thought she had been telling you. I take back what I said. I beg your pardon. I am incapable of offering you an insult."

“Let that pass,” said I; “I play no games upon anybody. I only desire your good.”

“I know it. And I thank you for every word you have said to me. I could have no claim upon you for so much kindness. You have given me much of your time. Your patience has not been worn out with me. You have done what few men could do; you have seen the heart of me rightly, and have indulged me in having my own strange way in talking about religion, as I believe few ministers would have done. And if there is a God in heaven, he will reward you,—I know he will reward you.”

The tears gushed from his eyes; and pulling his handkerchief from his pocket, he turned away from me, to the window, and wept convulsively. After a moment, turning suddenly to me, with a manifest effort to control his emotions, he said:—

“I am too apt to lead you off from our subject. I am sorry for it. But you have prevailed by yielding to me.—I want you to stay a little longer to-day, if you can. I have not long to live. This cough and these night-sweats will soon wear me out. I should be an idiot to hope to get well. I have no company now, except yours and my aunt’s. Conversation does not hurt me; and it would be no matter, you know, if it did. I am soon to go. Earth has done with me. The grave lifts up her voice to claim me. I am

preparing to say, yes, I come. But one thing troubles me. My heart is, to tell you that difficulty. It is not easy for me to keep clear from my old infidel thoughts, and I want to tell you how I was led on to be an infidel."

"I should like to hear that very much," said I. "And as to your amount of strength, I leave you to judge of it. I will go or stay, just as you desire, only tell me frankly what your desire is."

"I thank you," said he; (his eyes filling with tears,) "I am unable to tell you how much my very heart thanks you. I know there is little value in the thanks of a dying man; but they are all I have to give, and my heart forces them to my tongue."

"I ought to thank *you*," said I, "for these interviews. They gratify me much, and I assure you they profit me too."

After a short pause, and subduing his emotions, he continued:—

"For some time I have been astonished at myself. My thoughts are full of evil. The old follies will come over me. They torment my mind; and I know they offend God. My infidelity had become interwoven with my strongest feelings. Though I have been led to know its deceptions, its old lies still haunt me, as if a host of infernal spirits were sent to thrust them back into my heart. This troubles me. I am vexed with my-

self, because I have not vigor of mind to stand to the truth, since I have been convinced of it. My wickedness within is too mighty for me. Satan tempts me with his lies. It *is* Satan. He comes to me suddenly. He comes at midnight sometimes, when I would pray, if I could; and the horrible idea darts like an arrow, into my mind, 'religion is all a delusion.' I have said that to my aunt very often; and now Satan says it to me. I know it is a lie; but the thought torments my very soul."

"You need not be troubled about it," said I. "If you *hunted up* the idea yourself, or, if you *welcomed* it, when it comes, you would have some cause for trouble and alarm. It is not *temptation* that can injure us, or prove our insincerity. The *treatment* we give to temptation is the thing to be looked at. Since the temptation comes to you without your bidding, and since you do not welcome it, but reject it, and aim to dismiss it, *as* a temptation; the treatment you give it accords with the will of God, and shows that you desire and intend to obey him."

"So I do, sir; but my wicked heart is overflowing with evil. I wanted to tell you how my unbelief became blended with my blood. I am an Irishman. Early in life my country's wrongs lay on my heart, like a burden. My blood burns at this moment, to think of the oppressions of

England! Before the suns of a dozen summers had shone upon me, I had learnt to say, 'the English are tyrants and hypocrites. They profess to be a Christian people. But they wrong my country!' As I grew older I read history. I read the court trials, which grew out of what they called 'the Irish rebellion of ninety-eight.' I read of Emmet, and other men like him, led to a disgraceful execution, when they deserved the plaudits of all mankind! I read Curran's Speeches. I read of the infamous informers hired by the government to swear to *anything*, in order to get the blood of an Irishman! The English have oppressed us, sir! They have ruined Ireland by the most cruel and heartless injustice! by their tyranny and taxation! and then to crown their barbarity, they call us low, and stupid, and incapable of improvement, sir! and all this, though their victories have been bought with Irish blood, and no small part of the eloquence of their Parliament itself was the eloquence of Irishmen."

He was becoming so much excited, that I thought it best to interpose, for the purpose of quieting his feelings, and leading his thoughts into another channel. I said to him:—

"The things, you complain of, were acts of the *Government*, not of the *people*. Many of the people did not approve of them. None of the



*Christian* people approved of any injustice. It was not religion, but irreligion, which led to any oppression ; and you ought not to lay down at the door of Christianity the blame which belongs to her enemies. You attribute to religion, what you ought to attribute to the want of it. If all the people and the government had been controlled by the principles of Christianity, there would have been none of those wrongs which so much excite you.”

“I know it, sir. I am sure of it,” said he. “But I was telling you how I was made an infidel. The English boast of their magnanimity. They talk loftily of ‘English honor,’ and of their ‘religion.’ And only a few days since—let me see—it was this day eight-days, as I was reading an old paper, I came upon the place where one of your own statesmen calls England, ‘the bulwark of our holy religion.’ It is too much, sir! Oppression, heartless and unrelenting oppression carried on through ages, cannot be justified! There is no apology for it. And after all this ; for the English to speak of their Christianity, and call themselves ‘the most religious nation on earth,’ and make other people believe it—sir, there never was any impudence equal to this! Look at India, sir! The English have made her red with the blood of her innocent children! They have made themselves rich with the gold, of which they have

robbed her! They have butchered the half-civilized people by the thousands and hundreds of thousands! with no decent argument of justice, and for no other reason, than to gratify their own lordly pride and get riches by the right of their cannon! And when the news of a new victory over the feeble reaches '*brave England*;' they call themselves a religious people, and give thanks to God in their churches for success on another field of butchery! This completes the farce; till the very next year brings round a like occasion! All this is true, sir. You cannot dispute it. It is history. And when I began in early life, to learn such transactions, I could not respect a religion, that would allow them. I disbelieved in such a religion. I became an infidel. The true history of England is enough to make a world full of infidels! Ireland and India tell tales of blood about the religion of England. I can respect Mahometanism. It acts according to its principles. I can respect Popery and her Inquisition, for the same reason. But Protestant England, as she calls herself, I despise for her mean hypocrisy! Her religion is described in three words,—*pride*, *avarice*, and *oppression*. All this became stamped into my heart, as I was growing up towards manhood. I knew that the established church of England was nothing but a part of her governmental hypocrisy. I knew that her Protestantism

was only a political pretence. I felt for my country's wrongs ; and I rejected religion, because of the example that I studied so constantly. The example never appeared more base to me, than it does this moment. And I am troubled now because my old system of thought will come back upon me, like a torrent, and tempt me to disbelieve in Christianity, as often as I think of the wrongs of my country."

Said I, "In my opinion, you can easily get over all that difficulty. You have only to think of that which you know to be true, that is, that Christianity never sanctioned any of the pride, avarice and oppression you complain of; but that it was abusively made a cloak to cover such sins. In that nation it became linked with the government,—(which union I dislike as much as you do,—) and because of that union it became corrupted. As you took the government and its actions for an example of the influence of religion, or, for a test of its truth, you looked in the wrong direction. You should rather have looked at the pious in private life. You should have looked where there *was* some influence of Christianity,—not where there was none. You should have looked at the Bible Society, the Missionary Society, the Sunday Schools and Orphan Asylums, and attempts to relieve the oppressed and down-trodden. *There* was religion in fact, not in mere

name. And now, when you perceive that you erred, in taking what men *falsely called* religion, as an example of it, surely you need not be troubled with your old infidelity."

"So it seems to me," said he. "But Satan tempts me, as if I was now embracing a religion which has crushed my country."

"It never crushed your country. You know it never did. It was a spirit directly the *opposite* of Christianity, which perpetrated the sins you complain of. Christianity would have saved your country. And you ought to welcome it to your heart, for your eternal salvation, more eagerly than you would ever have welcomed a deliverer to your native land."

"So I do," said he. "So I will. I believe in Christianity. I know I need it. I believe Jesus Christ came to save sinners. I trust him to save me. I rely on the Holy Spirit to aid me against the temptations of Satan and the sinfulness of my own heart. You spoke of examples of religion in private life. Let me tell you, the example of my old aunt has been a *demonstration* to me. Satan cannot shake it."

I again proposed to leave him for the present, and call at another time, lest so long a conversation should injure him.

"*Another time!*" said he, "*another time!* You astonish me, sir! I am a dying man! I

stand on the verge of time now ! I feel that the grave-digger is at the side of me ! You may talk of time. With your health and prospects, it is not unnatural. But if I should be talking of time, death would laugh at me, and call me fool and liar !”—And then, turning to me, and fixing his keen eyes upon my face, as he stood before me :—“ Tell me what to do, to be ready to die.”

Said I, “ You believe in God, the Infinite, Eternal Spirit.”

“ *I do,*” said he.

“ Then pray to him,” said I.

“ *I have,* and *I will,*” said he.

“ You believe you are a sinner ?” said I.

“ *I know I am,*” said he.

“ Then repent, and trust in Christ for pardon.”

“ Will repentance save me ?”

“ No,” said I ; “ Christ Jesus saves sinners. You must not trust to your repentance and faith to save you. That would be self-righteousness. Trust only in the crucified Son of God, your proposed surety.”—(After a pause—)

“ What must be done first, *before* I trust in him.”

“ Nothing. Just nothing.”

“ How ? Is there no preparation to make ?”

“ No ; none at all.”

“ But, holiness—” said he.

“ Results from faith in Christ,” said I.

“And the Holy Spirit—” said he.

“Is your only hope,” said I. “Without his aid you will neither repent nor believe. It is his office to take of the things of Christ, and show them unto us.”

“Will you pray with me?” said he.

We fell on our knees. I offered a short prayer, and left him.—I never saw him afterwards.

I called to see him the next day, but his friends would not allow it, because he was so much exhausted. I understood from his nurse, that immediately after I left him the day before, he sent for his aunt, told her that he renounced all his infidelity, that he had not a doubt the Bible was from God, and that the atonement of Jesus Christ was all-sufficient for a dying sinner. He continued his conversation and prayer with her, till he fainted; and she was obliged to call for aid, to lift him from the floor, and lay him upon his bed.

I made another attempt to see him, but his aunt sent word to me at the door, that she was very grateful for my attentions to him and thanked me much; but she begged me not to come in, for he was not able to see me. He had not strength to utter a sentence.

Just at this time, I left home, and on my return after an absence of three weeks, I learned that he was buried the week before my return. I could not find his aunt. I have never seen her,

and know not the reason why she sent for me, only as I understood from the lady at whose house he died, that she had at some time heard me preach. This same lady told me, that "the young man died in peace, with praises for the atonement of Jesus Christ on his lips."

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I have never had my feelings more deeply interested, than they were in this young Irishman. He was a man of uncommon talents. He was frank and candid. He was full of enthusiasm. It is impossible to convey in writing any just idea of the ardor and eloquence with which he spoke, when he became excited. There was a sort of romance, too, in the mystery in which his aunt so constantly shrouded herself. He was an avowed infidel. And what, in my opinion, is a very uncommon thing, he was an honest infidel. The arguments, by which he attempted to sustain his infidelity, were peculiar. He was evidently in the last stages of life, the subject of a hasty consumption, of which nobody could be more sensible than himself. He was open to conviction. And it was very evident, that he entertained a most profound respect for his pious aunt, who had induced him to send for me.

I think it likely, that that woman was the real means of his conversion and salvation. She was an example of practical piety, which his infidelity could not refute, and which his conscience could not but honor. He evidently did not say to me all that he felt on that subject. Whenever he alluded to her, after a few words, he would seem to check himself, and soon change the subject. But, occasionally, when he became excited, some expression would come out, which showed how powerful her influence had been over him. I can never forget the ardor and depth of emotion, with which he uttered the expression:—"You spoke of examples of religion in private life. Let me tell you, the example of my old aunt has been a *demonstration* to me. Satan cannot shake it."

It is true that infidelity cannot withstand the force of reason and argument; but true godly example can come nearer the life-spot of religion. It knocks at the door of the heart. If the truths of Christianity were seconded by the devoted and pious lives of all her professed disciples, the unbelief of the world would soon cease. *Private example of godliness* is what the world most needs.

All men will not think alike in reference to the mode in which this young Irishman was led into infidelity. Perhaps he too much blamed the government of England. Perhaps, also, his feelings towards the people were governed by a very natu-

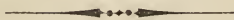


ral prejudice. But it is much to be deplored, that the governments of nations professing to be Christian, have been so unjust, so ready for war and conquest; and that the Christian people of such nations have so often sunk their principles amid the waves of some exciting popularity, and have shouted over a victory in war, when they ought to have shed tears of bitterness over its injustice and cruelty. They little reflect how much their conformity to the world hinders the triumphs of religion. War and conquest, too, may sometimes be inevitable perhaps. The general injustice of mankind may sometimes make deadly conflict necessary for the defence of the good against the wicked. But *Christians* and Christian nations have much to answer for, on account of such things as this young Irishman complained of. Too much of our religion is stained with the pride, and politics, and avarice of the world. "Come out of her, my people."

I have some reason to believe, that no small blame was imputed to me, for remaining so long at a time, with a sick man, and hastening, (as they said,) his death, by my exhausting conversation. But *he* never blamed me. I venture to affirm his aunt never blamed me. They were quite as good judges of propriety, as those who were half-strangers to him in a boarding-house. Moreover, it would have been heartless to leave him,

and would have tended to make him call in question my sense of the importance and reality of the religion I urged upon him, when he used such language as I have here recorded. “No, sir; you are *not* to leave me yet. Conversation does not hurt me; and it would be no matter, you know, if it did. I am a dying man. I stand on the verge of time now. I feel that the grave-digger is at the side of me.—Another time! sir; another time! You astonish me! *You* may talk of time. But if I should be talking of time, death would laugh at me, and call me fool and liar. Earth has done with me. The grave lifts up her voice to claim me. I am preparing to say, yes, I come.”—Some men perhaps might have left a man who talked thus. I could not. I am sure, if any wise man had been in my place, and known him as I did, he would have done as I did.

## FAITH EVERYTHING



AMONG a large number of young people, who, at one time, were in the habit of meeting me every week, for the purpose of personal conversation on the subject of religion ; there was a very quiet, contemplative young woman, whose candor and simplicity of heart interested me very much. She did not appear to me, to be susceptible of much impulsive emotion, but to be very much a child of thought. Her convictions of sin, which appeared to me to be deep and clear, were uniformly expressed, more in the language of reason, than of emotion ; so that I sometimes feared, that she had only an ordinary and intellectual conviction, without much real discovery of her character, as a sinner against God. In addition to all the conversation I could have with her in the presence of others ; I often visited her at her own home. And because of her apparent destitution of any deep emotions, and my consequent fear, that her convictions were more speculative than real ; I labor-

ed to unfold to her the character of God, his Law, the nature of sin, the state of her own heart ; and aimed to impress truths of this kind upon her feelings and conscience. She assented to it all.—I urged upon her, the necessity of immediate repentance, her lost condition as a sinner, and her indispensable necessity of the atoning blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ, to save her from merited condemnation. She assented to all this.—I explained to her, again and again, the whole way of salvation for sinners, the grace of God, and the willingness of Christ to save her. She said she believed it all.—I cautioned her against resisting the Holy Spirit, by unbelief, by prayerlessness, by delaying her repentance and her fleeing to Christ ; and in every mode that my thoughts could devise, I tried to lead her to the gospel salvation. But it all seemed to be ineffectual. She remained apparently in the same state of mind. Thus she continued for several weeks. She gained nothing, and lost nothing. Studious of her Bible, prayerful, attentive to all the means of grace, she was still without peace, and still manifested no additional anxiety, and no disposition to discontinue her attempts to attain salvation. For a time, there had been with her manifestly an increasing solemnity and depth of seriousness ; but this time had gone by ; and she remained, to all appearance, fixed in the same unchanging state of mind.

Such was her condition, when I visited her again, without much expectation of any good to result from anything I could say. After many inquiries, and trying all my skill to ascertain, if possible, whether there was any vital religious truth which she did not understand, or any sin which she was not willing to abandon; I said to her plainly:—"Mary, I can do you no good! I have said to you everything appropriate to your state, that I can think of. I would aid you most willingly, if I could; but I can do you no good."

"I do not think you can," said she calmly; "but I hope you will still come to see me."

"Yes, I will," said I. "But all I can say to you is, *I know* there is salvation for you; but you must repent, you must flee to Christ."

We went from her house directly to the evening lecture. I commenced the service, by reading the Hymn of Dr. Watts:—

There is a voice of sovereign grace  
 Sounds from the sacred word;  
 "Ho! ye despairing sinners come  
 And trust upon the Lord."

My soul obeys the almighty call,  
 And runs to this relief;  
 I would believe thy promise, Lord,  
 Oh! help my unbelief.

To the dear fountain of thy blood,  
 Incarnate God, I fly;

Here let me wash my spotted soul  
From crimes of deepest dye.

Stretch out thine arm, victorious King,  
My reigning sins subdue ;  
Drive the old dragon from his seat,  
With his apostate crew.

A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,  
On thy kind arms I fall ;  
Be thou my strength and righteousness,  
My Jesus and my all !

This hymn was sung, and the service conducted in the usual manner. I forgot all about Mary, as an individual, and preached as appropriately as I was able, to the congregation before me.

The next day she came to me to tell me, that she "had made a new discovery."

"Well," said I, "what is it that you have discovered?"

"Why, sir," said she, "the way of salvation all seems to me now perfectly plain. My darkness is all gone. I see now what I never saw before."

"Do you see that you have given up *sin* and the world? and given your whole heart to Christ?"

"I do not think that I am a Christian; but I have never been *so happy* before. All is light to me now. I see my way clear; and I am not burdened and troubled as I was."

“And how is this? what has brought you to this state of mind?”

“I do not know *how* it is, or what has brought me to it. But when you were reading that Hymn last night, I saw the whole way of salvation for sinners perfectly plain, and wondered that I had never seen it before. I saw that I had nothing to do, but to *trust* in Christ:

A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,  
On thy kind arms I fall.

I sat all the evening, just looking at that hymn. I did not hear your prayer. I did not hear a word of your sermon. I do not know your text. I thought of nothing but that hymn; and I have been thinking of it ever since. It is so light, and makes me so contented. Why, sir,” (said she, in the perfect simplicity of her heart, never thinking that she was repeating what had been told her a thousand times,) “*don't you think that the reason why we do not get out of darkness sooner, is, that we don't believe?*”

“Just that, Mary,—precisely that. Faith in Jesus Christ to save is the way to heaven.”

The idea had not yet occurred to her mind, that she was a Christian. She had only *discovered the way*. I did not think it wise for me to suggest the idea to her at all, but leave her to the direction of the Holy Spirit and the truth of the hymn.

If the Holy Spirit had given her a new heart, I trusted he would lead her to hope, as soon as he wanted her to hope. The hymn which had opened her eyes, was the best truth for her to meditate at present.

I conversed with her for some time. She had no more troubles, no darkness, no difficulties. All was clear to her mind, and she rejoiced in the unexpected discovery she had made. "I now *know what to do*," said she; "I must trust in Jesus Christ; and I believe God will enable me to do so."

It was not till after the lapse of some days, that she began to hope,—that she had really become reconciled to God. But she finally came to the conclusion, that her religion commenced when she sat, that evening, pondering that hymn, and wondering she "had never discovered before, that sinners must *believe*."

She afterwards became a communicant in the church; and to the day of her death, so far as I have been able to ascertain, she lived as a *believer*.

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This case has suggested to my mind the inquiry, whether, as ministers, after all our preaching upon faith, we do not fail to insist directly



upon it as we ought, and tell inquirers, as Mary told me, "we have nothing to do but to trust." I deem it not improbable, that by the extensive and labored explanations we give, the minds of inquirers are often confused; and the very way we take to make religion plain, is the very means of making it obscure; and that Mary's simplicity of faith would be a far better sermon for many such persons. All the matter of a soul's closing with Christ may be wrapped up in a very little space,—may be a very simple thing. And what that thing is, the Holy Spirit seems to have taught Mary, "we have nothing to do but to trust.'

## SIMPLICITY OF FAITH.

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THE simplicity of Faith was once illustrated to me in another, and a very different manner.

I was preaching my ordinary weekly lecture in the evening ; when I was sent for in great haste, to visit a woman who was said to be dying, and who very much desired to see me. I closed the service, as soon as I could, and went immediately to her house. She was a member of my church, whom I had known very well, for years ; with whom I had been acquainted ever since her first serious impressions, before she became a communicant. As I entered the room where she lay, I found it filled with her friends, who had gathered around her to see her die. Making my way through the midst of them, I reached the side of her bed, and found her apparently in the last agonies of death. She was bolstered up in her bed, gasping for breath, almost suffocated by the asthma ; and the whole bed shook, by a palpitation of her heart,

which seemed to be shaking her to pieces. It appeared to me, that she could not live the quarter of an hour. I said to her ;—

“ Mrs. M., you seem to be very sick ?”

“ Yes,” said she, “ I am dying.”

“ And are you ready to die ?”

She lifted her eyes upon me, with a solemn and fixed gaze, and speaking with great difficulty, she replied ;—

“ Sir, God knows—I have taken him—at his word—and—I am not afraid—to die.”

It was a new definition of faith. “ I have taken him at his word.” It struck me in an instant, as a triumph of faith. “ God knows I have taken him at his word, and I am not afraid to die.” It was just the thing for her to say. I have often tried to think, what else she could have said, that would have expressed so much, in such few words.

I prayed, some four minutes, by her bed-side, recited to her some passages of God’s word, and was about to leave her, for a moment, to her friends, whom she seemed anxious to address. She held me by the hand; and uttering a word at a time, as she gasped for breath, she said to me ;—

“ I wanted to tell you—that I can—trust—in God—while—I am dying.—You have—often told me—he would not—forsake me.—And now—I find—it true.—I am—at peace.—I die—willingly—and happy.”

In a few minutes, I left her, uttering to her such promises of the Saviour, as I deemed most appropriate.—However, she did not die. She still lives. But that expression of her faith has been of great benefit to me. It has aided me in preaching, and in conversation with inquiring sinners very often. It gave me a more simple idea of faith, than I ever had before. It put aside all the mist of metaphysics, speculation, and philosophizing. It made the whole nature of faith plain. Everybody could understand it:—“God knows, I have taken him at his word”

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If I am not mistaken, many of the speculations about faith have no tendency to *invite* faith. Rather the contrary. The speculations tend to throw over the exercises of faith an obscurity—tend to give them a dimness and distance, which make them too uncertain and too far off, for either clearness or comfort. We cannot afford to take such long journeys, and through such intricate windings. The Bible never asks us to do it. “The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth and in thy heart, that is, the word of faith which we preach, that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thy heart, that God hath raised him from the dead, thou

shalt be saved." This is all clear; "nigh thee." It is God's word. Speculations cannot improve it. Explanations cannot make it invite faith, only as they make its simplicity understood.

Many of the published Dissertations, on the nature and philosophy of the atonement, may be deep, but they are dark. We cannot afford to travel along such weary distances, and through such twilight paths, in order to get at the fact—at what it *is*, that we are to believe, and trust in. The Bible puts it directly before us;—"slain for us,—the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." We are asked to receive it, just on God's testimony: not by the aids of philosophy, but on the declaration of the fact. We "make God a liar," if we do not "believe the testimony, which he hath given us of his Son." We must take it *on God's declaration*. That is faith. The speculations may be useful to silence scepticism; but they never soften hearts. They may make us scholars; but they never make us children, or lead us home. The atonement satisfies God. He says so. That is enough. Leave it there. Men may try; but they will try in vain, when they attempt to convert the weapons for defending against infidelity, into bread to feed God's hungry children. We must "take God at his word." The philosophy of religion, is just faith: nothing more.

Many of our treatises on the subjects of faith, (having a kind of Germanizing about them—a kind of crazy philosophizing), are so filled up with explanations, and labored justifications, and attempted analogies; that they have more tendency to awaken doubt, than call forth faith. They have just the effect, to make the reader believe, that the authors are not themselves quite certain of *the thing*, since they take so much pains to demonstrate, explain, and *justify* it. They appear to go back of God's word, and invite other people to go along with them, as if God's word needed the props of their philosophy. This is no aid to faith. Let us "take God at his word." No philosophy can prop up a divine promise: or build a scaffolding to reach it.—Some of our Theologians, having a kind of German baptism, are more likely to make infidels, than make Christians. The same thing may be said of a great deal of modern religious literature—filled with philosophy, "falsely so called."

## WAITING FOR THE HOLY SPIRIT.



NEARLY twenty years have now passed away, since I became acquainted with the individual, of whom I am now to speak. I was called upon to preach, in connection with other ministers of the gospel, in a large village, and during the continuance of what was denominated a “protracted meeting.” These meetings had this designation from the fact, that they were continued, from day to day, for several successive days. The exercises usually consisted, in that part of the country, of preaching in the morning, afternoon and evening, with meetings for prayer and religious inquiry, before or after sermon. The sermons were usually preached, by those ministers settled in his vicinity, whom the minister of the church where the meeting was held, had invited for that purpose. At one of these meetings, I preached a sermon on the influences of the Holy Spirit. It was a time of revival in the church; and the truths of the gospel,

preached at such a time, when the Spirit of God was poured out, and when people were peculiarly attentive and solemn, were not likely to be entirely forgotten, even by those who were mere hearers of the word.

Some months after this, as I entered the same village again, on my way from a similar meeting in an adjoining parish, I beheld a crowd of people entering the Town Hall. I inquired the reason, and was told there was "a religious meeting there, that evening, probably a prayer meeting." I gave my horse into the charge of the hostler at the tavern, and without waiting for tea, mingled with the crowd, and entered the hall. Having already preached three times that day, and conversed with numbers who were seeking the Lord, I was too much wearied to think of doing anything more; and therefore endeavored to keep out of the sight of the clergyman, by taking a back seat, and leaning down my head. My attempt was in vain. He discovered me, and requested me to come forward to the desk. I preached a short sermon, the people dispersed, and I went with the clergyman to his home.

We were not seated in the parlor, before a servant entered, and said, a lady in the hall wished to see me. I immediately stepped into the hall, and a very genteel woman, about forty years of age, addressed me, with evident agitation:—



“I beg your pardon for troubling you to-night, sir, but I cannot help it. I have longed to see you ever since you preached here in August. I have often felt that I would give *anything* to see you, for even five minutes. I have prayed for that privilege. And when I saw you in the Town Hall to-night, I was so rejoiced that I could hardly remain in my seat; and I determined to follow you when you went out, till I got a chance to speak with you.”

“I am very glad to see you, Madam; but I suspect you have taken all this trouble in vain.”

“Why, sir, cannot you talk with me one minute? cannot you answer me one question?” said she, her eyes overflowing with tears.

“Certainly, certainly, Madam; I can talk with you as long as you please to favor me with your company, and will answer any questions you choose to ask, as well as I can; but I suspect you need an aid which I cannot give you.”

“Sir, I want only one thing of you. I want you to tell me how I shall procure the Holy Spirit. I have wanted to ask you this question for months. If you will only tell me, I will not intrude myself upon you any longer.”

(Entirely overcome with her emotions, she wept like a child.)

“*Intrude!* my dear lady. This is no intrusion. I am glad to see you. I thank you, with

all my heart, for coming to me. I beg you to do me the justice to believe it, and feel yourself perfectly at ease. Ask me anything, or tell me anything you will, with entire freedom. I will not abuse your confidence."

She stood before me, trembling and weeping, as if her heart would break. And as she aimed to repress her emotions, and removed her handkerchief from her eyes, the light of the hall-lamp shone full upon her face, and I was surprised at the deep solemnity and determination, which appeared in one of the most intelligent and beautiful countenances, that I ever beheld.

At this instant the lady of the house, perceiving the nature of our conversation, invited us into a private room. My new acquaintance told me who she was, and repeated the cause of her calling upon me. I asked her some questions, and conversed with her for some minutes, for the purpose of ascertaining more exactly the state of her mind, and adapting my words accordingly. Her intelligence and the elegance of her language surprised me. She was in middle life, a married woman, having a husband still living, and two small children. Her husband was not a pious man; and her thoughts about her own salvation had led her to think much of his, and of the duty she owed to her children. Her first serious impressions arose from the thought, that, not being a

member of the church, she could not dedicate her children to God in the ordinance of baptism; and this led her to think, that in her unbelief she could not fitly train them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

“Oh! sir,” said she; (the tears streaming from her eyes, and her sensations almost choking utterance;) “I would give all the world, to be a Christian! I know I am a sinner, an undone sinner! I have a vile and wicked heart. I have sinned all my life! I wonder God has spared me so long!”

“But he *has* spared you, Madam; when you did not deserve it. And what has he spared you for, but that you should repent of sin and flee to Christ for pardon?”

“I would repent, if I could. I want to be a Christian. But my hard, wicked heart is stronger than I! For years I have read my Bible, and struggled and prayed; and it has done me no good! I am afraid I shall be cast off forever! God has not given me his Spirit!”

“I too am afraid you will be cast off forever! Probably your danger is greater, than you think! But there is mercy in Christ for the chief of sinners. His blood cleanseth from—”

“I know it, sir; I know all that, from my Bible. I have read it a thousand times. But I cannot *come* to Christ without the Holy Spirit.”

“Madam, the text is plain, ‘if ye being evil

know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to—”

“But I am *not* one of his children, sir.”

“The text does not say, *to his children*, my dear Madam; it says, ‘*to them that ask him.*’ ‘Ask and ye shall receive.’”

“Oh! I *have* prayed—I *do* pray.”

“Allow me to ask you, Madam, how long you have been in this state of mind?”

“About three years. I was first brought to think of my salvation, soon after the birth of my first child; when my duty to my family led me to feel the need of religion. I could not have it baptized, for I was not a member of the church; and what troubled me more, I could not do my duty to it, for I was not a child of God.”

“And have you been accustomed, for so long a time, to read your Bible carefully?”

“Oh! I have read it all, again and again! I read it daily. I have prayed and wept over this subject, for long *years!* and have waited for the Holy Spirit to renew my heart.”

“And have you been waiting for the Holy Spirit for three years, in this state of mind?”

“Indeed, sir, I have.”

“Then, for *three years*, you have been waiting for what God gave you *three years ago*. It was the Holy Spirit, which first led you to feel you

were a sinner and needed Christ. The Holy Spirit has been striving with you all along, and you did not know it. He led you to the Bible. He led you to prayer. He sent you here to-night. He strives with you *now*, to lead you to Christ for forgiveness and peace."

"Do you think *so*?" said she with astonishment.

"I *know* so," said I. "God has been better to you, than you have thought. He has done what you have never given him credit for. He has called, and you have refused. He has invited, and you have held back. You thought you must not come, and could not. You may, on the spot. The Holy Spirit has not left you yet. I wonder that he has not; but you have another call to-night. And now, Madam; accept his invitation; repent; take Christ as your Saviour. Go home and give your heart to God, just as it is. You cannot make it better. The Holy Spirit is with you. Do not resist him any longer. You have stayed away from Christ, because you supposed you must. You wanted the Holy Spirit *first*; and thought you must not come to Christ, till your heart was better. The dispensation of the Spirit is in his hands. Go to the fountain. The Bible nowhere tells you to *wait* for the Holy Spirit; but, fleeing to Christ, to depend on his aid *now*."

"Pardon me, sir; I must ask you again, if you

really think, the Holy Spirit is striving with me?"

"Yes, my dear friend, I *know* he is. He has been for years. He offers you his aid. He calls you to Christ now. Go to Christ. Repent to-night. Accept and rest on Christ now. The Holy Ghost saith, 'To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart.'"

"And is that all you have to say to me, about the Holy Spirit?"

"Yes, that is *all*. The Holy Spirit this moment strives with you. God is willing to save you. Nothing but your own unbelief and impenitence can ruin you."

"Has the Spirit been striving with me?—and I did not know it?" (said she, in the manner of meditation, the tears streaming from her eyes.)—She left me, and returned to her home.

Early the next morning, before the sun rose, as I looked from my window, I beheld her coming through the thick dew which lay upon the grass, with hasty steps ascending the hill, on which the house where I lodged was situated. She asked for me at the door, and I immediately met her in the parlor.

"I thank you my dear friend, I thank you a thousand times for telling me that;" (said she, the moment she saw me; her eyes streaming with tears and her countenance beaming with joy.)

“It was all true. I have found it true. I can rejoice in Christ now. I am happy, sir, oh, I am happy. I thought I *must* come and thank you. I am afraid you will think me rude, in calling upon you at such an hour. But I was afraid you would be gone, if I delayed; and I could not let you leave town without telling you how happy I am, and how much I thank you. After I heard you preach, three months since, I thought you could tell me something about obtaining the gift of the Holy Spirit, and when I asked you about it last night, I was very much disappointed by what you said. I was amazed and confounded. You did not say what I expected. But I *believed* you. I spent the night over this subject. Happy night for me! And now, I *know* you told me the truth. You read my heart rightly. I bless God for what I have found. Pardon me, sir; I *must* ask you, to *tell other sinners, that Christ is waiting for them.* They do not know it, I am sure, any more than I did; or they would go to him. The Holy Spirit calls us to do so. With all my glad heart, I yield to him. I do not wait any longer. I bless you for telling me, I need not wait.”

Weeping for joy, she continued to talk to me in this manner, for some minutes.

I have not seen her since. But I have learned, that she publicly professed her faith, and

has lived for years, as a reputable and happy believer.

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Probably the influences of the Holy Spirit are more common with impenitent sinners, than they suppose. Such persons greatly err, when, instead of fleeing at once to Christ; they wait, and think they *must* wait, for some attainment first. Their waiting for it, is but a deceptive excuse; and if they suppose they have gained any attainment and on that ground Christ has accepted them; their religion is only self-righteousness and delusion. A broken heart is invited to the balm of Gilead. "Tell other sinners that Christ is waiting for them."

The subtlety of the adversary is wonderful. The want of the Holy Spirit was this woman's obstacle. The devil had led her to believe, that she was forsaken of the Spirit; and if she was, she knew from the Bible, that there was no other help for her. Instead of going to Christ, therefore, in faith; she miserably supposed, that she must wait. She did not know, that the very urgency and influence of the Holy Spirit consist in bringing sinners to embrace Jesus Christ, as he is offered to us in the gospel. The very thing that God wanted her to do, was the very thing that she supposed



she must *not* do; and thus she was compelled to wait in darkness and fear, by a subtle device of the adversary.—It is important for convicted sinners to know, that the cause of their irreligion is *not*, that Christ is not willing to receive them, but that they are not willing to trust in him.

## BUSINESS HINDRANCE.



A MEMBER of my congregation, a young man who was an apprentice, became attentive to the subject of religion; and finally, his convictions became very distressing. I had many conversations with him. It all appeared to be in vain. He continued in his distress, without hope, and almost in despair.

One day he said to me, that he believed, he never should obtain religion, if he did not quit work, and devote his whole time and thought to the subject of his salvation. I told him, that that would do him no good—that his duty was to work—that if he would not work, he ought not to eat—that neglecting an earthly duty would not lead him to the discharge of a spiritual one. I argued the case with him strenuously on the ground of the scriptures, “six days shalt thou labor.” I insisted upon it, that the Bible gave no such directions about work, as he was inclined to follow—

that if he expected to do his duty to God, he must not omit doing his duty to the world—that, at most, he ought not to do without working, any longer than he could do without eating,—for, “if any would not work neither should he eat”—and that this want of time was only an excuse of a deceitful heart, to keep him from an instant duty, that is, fleeing to Christ in faith.

But I could not convince him. He said his mind was drawn off from religion, by his daily employment; and in his opinion, if he had nothing to do, but to seek God, to read and pray, he should soon find salvation. I told him he would be more likely to find a delusion, and *call* it salvation. But I could not shake him from his purpose.

He did quit work. He went away over the river, beyond the reach of his companions, got a room alone in an obscure house, and shut himself up with his Bible. He remained there a week. At the end of that time, he called himself to an account, examining his heart, whether he had made any progress. It seemed to him, that he had made none at all. He then determined to be more diligent in the study of his Bible, more anxious in prayer, and to compel his obstinate heart to yield. He often attended our religious meetings in the evenings, and then would return to his solitude. He remained there three weeks. And to his utter astonishment, he found his re

ligious impressions almost entirely gone. He abandoned his retirement and came back to his work in self-defence. "I found," said he, "my own heart was the worst companion I could have. If I cannot come to repentance in the work-shop, I am sure I never can *alone*. If I had stayed there much longer, I should have cared nothing about religion."

He went to work. His seriousness returned. And in about four weeks, he entertained a hope in Christ. He united with the church, and I knew him for years afterwards. He appeared to be a decided and happy Christian.

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The human heart will weave an excuse for impenitence, out of anything. This want of time is a very common excuse. But it is a falsehood. The advice given to anxious inquirers so frequently in times of revival, to shut themselves up alone till they have found salvation, just misleads them. It makes them think they lack *time* for religion; while, in fact, they only lack *heart*. Let us obey the Bible.

## WAITING FOR CONVICTION.



THERE WAS a young woman in my congregation at one time, about whom I felt no little interest, and had for a long time sought an opportunity to speak with her alone, on the subject of religion. I had spoken to her more than once, sometimes in the presence of her mother, and sometimes before some other member of the family. But she was very reserved. She seemed entirely disinclined to any conversation on the subject. Her taciturnity was so constant, that I could only ask questions, and she answered only in monosyllables, or not at all. I had some acquaintance with her, as a neighbor and friend, but little as a minister. She appeared to me to possess more than an ordinary share of intellect and amiability. I had often noticed that she gave strict attention to my sermons. But, though many others, some among her acquaintance, and some in her own family

had then recently become, (as we hoped,) the children of God; yet she never manifested any special concern. When I thought of her good sense, her candor, her kindness of feeling, and her sobriety, I was surprised that she did not seek God. She was now passing by the first years of her youth, and it pained me to think that they were gone, and that she was now entering the years of her womanhood, a stranger to Christ. I resolved to see her in private, and aim to overcome that obstinate taciturnity, which I despaired of overcoming in the presence of any other person, and which, as I supposed, hindered me from perceiving the real state of her mind, and knowing what to say to her.

I called at her house and asked for her. But, as she and her mother, both at the same time, entered the room where I was, I was obliged to say to her mother, that I desired to see her daughter alone, if she would be so kind as to grant me that privilege. "Oh, *certainly*," said she, and left the room, manifestly disconcerted, if not displeased.

I immediately said to the daughter, "I am always happy to see your mother; but I called this morning on purpose to see you alone."

"I knew you asked for *me*," said she; "but mother would come in; she always *will*, when you ask for me. I don't know why it is, but she always seems to be unwilling to have you see me alone."

“And did you wish to see me alone?”

“Not *particularly*; but mother and I are such great *talkers*, that you will find one of us at a time quite enough.”

“Do you call yourself a great talker?” said I.

“Oh yes, they say I am; and I suppose it is true.”

“Well, will you talk with *me*? I have called on purpose to talk with you on the subject of your religion, if you will allow me that privilege.”

She was mute. She cast her eyes downwards, and seemed confused.

“I hope you will not consider me intrusive,” said I, “or impertinent; but I have long felt a deep interest in you, and have desired an opportunity to converse with you freely and confidentially about your religious duty.”

“I did not know that you ever thought of me.”

“Then certainly I have need to beg your pardon,” said I. “I must have treated you very impolitely if you did not know that I ever thought of you.”

“Oh, *no*, sir; you have never treated me impolitely.”

“And certainly I never *will*. But permit me to ask you, are you willing to converse with me about your own religion?”

“I have got no religion,” said she, with a downcast and solemn look.

“And do you mean always to live without it? and die without it?”

She made me no answer. I paused for an answer, as long as I thought I could, without embarrassing her feelings; but no answer came. I continued:—

“You say you have got no religion. Would it not be wise and well for you to attend to that subject; and aim to attain a religion, that will secure to you the favor of God and everlasting life?”

She made me no answer. After another pause, I said: “You think of this subject I suppose, sometimes?”

She made no reply.

“Are you unwilling to think of it?”

No answer.

“Are you unwilling to have me speak to you about it?”

No answer.

“Perhaps this *time* is not agreeable to you. Would you prefer to have me call at some other time?”

No answer.

“My dear girl,” said I earnestly; “I did not come here to embarrass you, or annoy you in any manner. I love you, and wish to do you good. But if you prefer it, I will leave you, at once. I



will not intrude myself upon you, or intrude upon your attention a subject, to which you do not wish to lend your mind."

"Why sir," said she, "I am glad to see you."

"Why, then, will you not talk with me?"

"Indeed, sir, I do not know what to say."

"Pardon me, my dear girl; I do not wish to embarrass you, or blame you; but certainly you *could* answer me some of the questions I have asked. And now allow me to ask you again; do you think much on the subject of religion? or have you any concern about it?"

She made me no answer.—After a painful, but brief pause, I continued:—

"I beg you to speak to me. Say anything you think or feel. I assure you I have no feelings towards you, but those of kindness and respect. I *will* treat you politely and kindly. But, my child, your silence embarrasses me. I am afraid to say another word, lest I should hurt your feelings. You might deem another question an impertinence."

"You may *ask* me," said she, with a forced smile.

"Then," said I, "are you giving any serious or prayerful attention to religion?"

"No, sir, not at present."

"I thank you for the answer. But let me ask; do you not think that you *ought* to at-

tend to it, earnestly, and prayerfully, and without delay?"

She did not answer, but appeared quite confused. The blood mounted to her cheeks. I pitied her.

"Believe me," said I, "I do not mean to confuse you; but why do you not speak to me, and tell me your feelings plainly and freely? And I will hold all that you say, as confidential as you please to make it."

"Well, sir, *I will*. But I know you will not like it."

"No matter for that," said I.

"I do not wish to oppose *you*; but *I* do not think it would do any good for me to attend to religion, with my present feelings."

"Pray, what do you mean? I do not understand you."

"I mean," said she, "that I have no particular anxiety about religion; and I do not believe it would do any good for me to attend to religion, till I have some greater anxiety about it."

"And are you *waiting* for such an anxiety?"

"Certainly I am."

"Do you expect to get it by *waiting*? Do you think it will ever *come* to you?"

"I do not know, indeed," said she, very sadly.—  
"I used to hope so; but I have waited for it a long time."

“Does the Bible tell you to wait for it?”

“I do not know, as it *tells* me to wait. But it speaks of conviction, of broken and contrite hearts; and Christian people speak of awakenings, alarms, and distresses of mind, and influences of the Holy Spirit, with those who are led to religion. And you preach such things; as if these were the beginning. And if I have none of these, how *can* I begin to seek God?”

“Did you ever hear me preach, that one should *wait* for these?”

“Yes.”

“No, *never!* my child.”

“Yes I have, I am sure.”

“*Never, never!* I preach nothing like it.”

“I remember your *text*, sir; and you always preach the text: ‘On thee do I wait all the day.’”

“Yes; and in that sermon I told you, that waiting *on* God was one thing, and waiting *for* God was quite another. The first was right, and the last was wrong. We wait *on* him by such things as prayer. Did I not tell you so?”

“Yes, sir; you did.”

“And do you pray?”

“No.”

“Then you do not obey my sermon, and wait *on* God.”

“How can I, with no conviction?”

“How do you expect to get conviction?”

“I do not know.”

“Do you know and feel, that you are a sinner against God, and not reconciled to him?”

“Yes, I do.”

“Do you know, that you cannot save yourself, and need Jesus Christ to save you?”

“Yes, I *know* it;” (said she, with a very significant accent upon the word, know.)

“Then you have *some* conviction.”

“You may call it conviction, if you will; but I have no deep impressions.”

“And are you just waiting for such impressions, before you will do anything; and when they come, you mean to seek God?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Then, *you may wait forever!*”

“Oh! I hope not!”

“Probably you will! Such deeper impressions seldom come, by waiting for them. How long have you been waiting for them already?”

“About five years, sir.”

“And have you *gained* anything, in those five years—any deeper impressions?”

“I do not know as I have.”

“Will you gain anything, by waiting five years more?”

“I am afraid not;” (said she, sadly.)

“And *I* am afraid not,” said I “You may

wait on, till you have just waited into the grave, and your *waiting will do you no good!*"

"What *shall* I do?"

"'Seek ye the Lord while he may be found. Call ye upon him while he is near.'"

"What! with my present impressions?"

"Yes; with just your present impressions."

"I do not believe, it will do any good."

"Perhaps not. But five years' *waiting* has done you no good; and you have no reason to think, that five more would do you any. You have tried *waiting*; and now I want you to try seeking, as the Bible bids you."

"I would seek the Lord; if I thought it was possible, with my present feelings."

"It *is* possible. I am confident you would not seek in vain. I *know* you are deceived. I know you are acting contrary to the commands of the gospel. I know you are putting your own wisdom in the place of God's wisdom, which calls you to seek the Lord, now, to-day. But you are waiting for conviction.

"Now I beg you to hear me, and treasure up what I say. I have several things to say to you. Will you hear me?"

"Most willingly, sir."

"Then, 1. Remember, that God never tells you to *wait* for convictions, or anything else. He tells

you, 'Behold now is the accepted time, behold now is the day of salvation.'

"2. You have *no occasion* to wait for any deeper impressions. In my opinion, you do not need them. You have impressions deep enough. How deep impressions does a sinner need? What does he need to know and feel, in order to be prepared to come to Christ? I will tell you: he needs to know, that he is a sinner—that he cannot save himself—that he needs Christ to save him. That is all—and you have all that, already.

"3. Deeper impressions *never yet came* by waiting for them, without prayer and without attempting to flee to Christ—and they never *will*.

"4. Your *duty* is to turn from sin and the world to Christ, at once, to-day.

"5. If, after all, you do need any deeper impressions, I will tell you *how* you may get them, and you will get them in no other way: you will get them *just when* you aim to do as God bids you, to repent, to flee to Christ, to give God your heart. At present you are excusing yourself from all this, by the false notion, that you have not impressions enough to be able to do so. You do not, this moment, feel condemned for neglecting the great salvation; because you think you cannot attain it till you have deeper convictions. This is your excuse. And it is all a deception, in my opinion. But if you do need more deep convic-

tions, you will get them when you aim to come to Christ. Then you will find you have no *heart* to do it, no *will* to do it, no readiness to deny yourself, and renounce the world, and then you will begin to see what an undone and helpless sinner you are, and how much you have need to pray for God's help, as you are *not* doing now. This is the way to gain deeper impressions, if you need them,—and the *only* way. Five years more of waiting, or fifty years, will not give them to you.—This is all I have to say."

I left her.—About three days after this I called on her again, and found her in a very solemn and sad state of mind. She said, that on thinking of what I had told her, she believed every word of it, and tried, with all her might, to do as I had exhorted her. She read her Bible, and prayed, and the more she tried to give up the world, and give God her heart, the more she found that her heart would not yield. She said she "could do nothing with it,—she did not believe there ever was such a heart, so opposed to God,—she never knew before what a sinner she was,—she did not believe there was any possibility of her ever turning to God."

"Jesus Christ," said I, "is able to save you."

She replied, "I suppose he is; but I do not think he ever will!"—As she said this she appeared deeply solemn, and was overcome with her emotions, which choked her utterance.

“Jesus Christ,” said I, “is *more* than able to save you—he is willing.”

She lifted her eyes upon me, with a despairing look: “I wish I *knew* that he is willing.”

“You *do* know it,” said I. “His word tells you so. ‘Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, and ye shall find rest for your souls. If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely. Ho! every one that thirsteth; come ye to the waters. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.’”

“Oh!” said she, “I will try to seek God.”

I instantly left her.

Not long after, (a few days,) I called upon her, and found she was calm, and happy in hope. She said that all her trust was in Christ, and that the forbearance and love of God appeared to her most wonderful. She thanked me for what I had said to her. “You opened my eyes,” said she. “When you came here that morning I did not intend to talk with you; and when you began to ask me, I was resolved not to tell you how I felt. And if you had not *made* me tell, and had not almost forced me to attend to religion now, I should



have waited for deeper convictions all my life. But, sir, I think you were wrong, when you told me I did not need any deeper convictions. At that time I knew almost nothing of my heart. I never found out how much it was opposed to God and his demands, till some time afterwards, when I resolved that I would become a Christian that very day."

"And did your resolve bring you to Christ?"

"Oh no! not at all. It did me no good. My heart would not yield. I was opposed to God, and found I was such a sinner, that I could do nothing for myself. My resolutions did me no good; and I gave up all, and just cried for mercy. Awhile after that, I began to be at peace. I do not know *how* it is, but *I* have done nothing for myself. Indeed, when I cried so for mercy, I had *given up trying* to do anything. It seems to me, that when I gave up trying, and cried to God; he did everything for me."

Some months after this, she united with the church, and has lived in its communion ever since, a useful and decided Christian.

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There are multitudes in our congregations, who are just *waiting*, while they ought to be *acting*—who have a sort of indefinite hope about the aids

of the Holy Spirit, yet to be experienced; while they are pursuing the very course to fail of attaining any such aids. They think they *must* wait. They think wrong. They must work, if they would have God work in them. There can be no religion without obedience. And there is not likely to be, with any sinner, a just sense of his dependence, till he earnestly intends and attempts to *obey the gospel*. Religion is practical. Much of its light comes by practical attempts. "If ye will do the works, ye shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God."

Probably this young woman would have been led to her Saviour, five years before; had it not been for her error, about waiting for deeper impressions.

## NOT DISCOURAGED.

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A YOUNG woman of very yielding and amiable disposition, who belonged to my congregation, became alarmed about her condition, as a sinner; and set herself to seek the Lord. I visited her, and conversed with her, repeatedly. Her seriousness became more and more deep. I left her, one day, with a very strong expectation upon my mind, that the next time I should see her, she would be at peace with God. I thought so, because she seemed to realize, that God's law justly condemned her, as a sinner; that she was dependent upon sovereign grace; and that she ought to repent and flee to Christ. I thought so also; because she appeared to me just as others, with whom I was conversing every day, *had* appeared, immediately before their hopeful conversion to Christ. She seemed to me to know and feel the truths of the gospel, which are addressed to unconverted sinners; and therefore, I believed the Holy

Spirit was with her to lead her to salvation. I left her with the urgency of the text, "behold now is the accepted time," pressed upon her conscience and her heart, with all the emphasis my words could give it.

The next time I saw her, a day or two afterwards, her whole appearance was altered. Her solemnity was gone. Her anxieties were evidently diminished. She met me with a smile that surprised and pained me. And, directly the contrary to her former habit; she began to speak of some common matter. Said I:

"Have you given Christ your heart, Mary?"

"Oh no, not yet," said she; "but I don't feel so bad as I did."

"Why not?" said I. "What reason have you to feel any better?"

"I don't know, as you would think I have any reason; but I hope I shall be a Christian, by and by. I don't feel in so much haste as I did; and I am not so much afraid God will cast me off; and the sinfulness of my heart does not trouble me so much."

"My dear Mary!" said I, with astonishment and pain, "how is this? I expected different things! Evidently your seriousness is diminished! You care less for salvation than you did! What has altered your feelings since I saw you?"

"Why, when you left me the last time you

were here, and told me to repent that day, I was dreadfully troubled. I felt that my heart was opposing God; and I was afraid to think of living without Christ, another hour. Your last words, '*to-day, to-day,*' rung in my ears! I could not get rid of them. But pretty soon, Miss S. S. came in, about an hour after you went away; and I told her how I felt. But she told me not to be discouraged, only to keep on seeking the Lord. *She* said I was doing very well, and I ought not to feel so; and if I did not get discouraged, I should soon find religion."

"And you believed her?" said I.

"Yes, I believed her; and I have felt better ever since—a great deal better."

"Felt better! Mary!—You are resting on a lie! You are miserably deceived! Doing well? How can you be doing well, while an impenitent sinner, rejecting Christ, and exposed every moment to the wrath of God forever? Your friend, as you call her, has been doing the work of the great deceiver! She did not talk to you as the Bible does, '*to-day, to-day,* if ye will hear his voice!'"

I aimed to arouse her; but it was all in vain! Her anxieties departed! She ceased to pray! and in a few days more, she was as careless and worldly as ever.

It is not true, that a convicted and praying sinner is *doing well*, while without faith in Christ. Something more is needed. He must repent and believe. And certainly, if prayerless, he is doing ill.

This young woman, who misled the yielding and affectionate Mary, was a professor of religion; and one of those, who are very apt to be busy, in times of revival. Doubtless she meant well; but her influence was very unhappy. No one is ever safe in giving any counsel to impenitent sinners, unless he is careful to talk, just as the Bible talks to them. Blind guides do mischief.

## RELIANCE ON MAN.

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As I was leaving the place of a morning prayer-meeting, which was attended, in a time of revival, very early in the morning; a young man about sixteen years of age came to me, and asked permission to accompany me home; for "he wanted to talk with me."

"What do you wish to say to me?" said I.

"Why—I want you to tell me what to do."

"I *have* told you, again and again. I can tell you nothing different—nothing new. You must repent, if you would be saved. You must give up your self-righteousness and flee to Christ. The Law condemns you. The sovereign grace of God only can save you. You must give up your miserable and long-continued attempts to save yourself. You must give God your heart, as he requires, and as I have explained to you already, many times."

"Yes, I know that; but I am so distressed! I

cannot live so! I want you to tell me something else."

"I cannot relieve your distress. Christ alone can give you rest. I have nothing else to tell you. I have told you all the truth—all you need to know."

"I thought," said he, "perhaps you could say something, that would help me; if I went to your house."

"So you have said to me more than once, and I have told you better. God only can help you. You must rely on him."

"But I should like to talk with you again about my feelings, in your study."

"It would do you no good. You have nothing to say, that you have not said before; and I have nothing new to say to you."

"Well—may I go home with you?"

"No. Go home. Man cannot help you. The whole matter lies betwixt yourself and God."

He turned away, the most downcast creature I ever saw. It seemed as if his last prop was gone. He walked as if his limbs could scarcely carry him.

I had not been at home an hour, before he came to tell me, that his burden was gone. He said, that after I "had cast him off," all hope forsook him, and he "had nowhere else to go but to God." Before he reached his home, (about a mile,) he



had given all into the hands of God ; and he felt so much relieved of his burden of sin and fear, that he thought he “ would turn right about, and come right back and tell me.”—“ But,” said he, “ I do not believe I should have gone to God, if *you* had not cast me off.”

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Anxious sinners are often kept from Christ, by their reliances on men. A great amount of religious conversation often diminishes their impressions. It tends to blunt the edge of truth. It keeps the heart in a kind of reliance on men. Conversation with judicious Christians and judicious ministers is vastly important for inquiring sinners ; but there is a point where it should cease. All that men can do is contained in two things—to make sinners understand God’s truth, and make its impression upon their hearts and consciences, as deep as possible. If they aim at anything more, they are just trying to do the work of the Holy Spirit.—Visiting among inquirers one morning, I called on five different individuals, one after another, in the course of a single hour, and in each case was sorry I had called at all : for in each case, after a very few minutes of conversation, I was fully persuaded that God’s

truth was deeply felt, and that anything which I could say would tend to diminish the impressions, which the Holy Spirit was making on their hearts. I aimed to say just enough not to have them think I did not care for them; and got away as soon as I could, for fear of doing an injury.—Every one of these individuals afterwards dated her religious hope from the same day.—No *man* can preach so powerfully as the Holy Spirit. It is vastly important to *know when to stop*. The divine writers understood this. They are perfect examples. Their *silence* is to be imitated, as well as their utterance.

## BAD ADVICE.



A FEW weeks after this, I had a similar request from another young man, whom, also, I had often seen, and with whom I had many times conversed about his salvation. We were leaving the church, at the close of the evening service, when he met me at the door, and said to me, that if I was willing, he would go home with me. He seemed to be under just and deep conviction, as a sinner; and more so, when I had conversed with him in the former part of the same day, than I had ever seen him before. I knew it was not in my power to teach him any important truth, which I had not already taught him; and I feared, that anything which I could say to him would diminish, instead of increasing the impressions which the Holy Spirit was making upon his mind. I wished him to realize, that his help must come from God. I recollected the case of the other young man. He appeared just like him, when he

made the same request. I have never known two persons more alike. Consequently I refused his request. He entreated; but I would not yield. I wished to treat him affectionately; but as he said he had no question to ask me and nothing new to tell me, I refused to allow his accompanying me home, and bade him good night. As he turned away, he seemed ready to sink; and I could not but hope, that he was about to give up all his attempts to save himself, and flee to the Saviour of sinners.

A few evenings afterwards he came to the meeting appointed for conversation, with a very altered look. I asked him;—

“Do you think you have made any progress, since I saw you, in seeking the Lord?”

“No, I do not think I have.”

“Do you think you ever will?”

“Oh yes, I believe I shall.”

“When?”

“I don't know *when*; but I am not discouraged. I mean to keep on.”

“Keep on in what?”

“In seeking religion.”

“Then you are keeping on *now*, without religion.”

“I suppose so.”

“Is that a good way to keep on? keeping on in impenitence, in enmity against God, in ‘tramp-

ling under foot the blood of Christ and doing despite to the Spirit of all grace?" It seems to me, that you would do well to stop, and turn about, instead of *keeping on* towards perdition, any longer!"

"Why," said he, "ought I to be discouraged?"

"Certainly; the sooner you are discouraged from 'keeping on' towards ruin, the better."

"I am not much troubled about that."

"So I perceive. But you *were* troubled, when I parted with you a few evenings since."

"Yes, I was *then*, very much."

"And what has altered your feelings? Is there not quite as much reason for your being troubled now?"

"I do not know, but there may be as much *reason*—but just after I left you and was going home, I met Mr. — and told him how I felt, just as I had told you; and *he* told me not to be discouraged, but to keep on, read the Bible and pray, and I should find peace of mind, by and by."

"He *told you wrong*. He ought to have told you, to turn from sin to God instantly, embracing Christ in faith; not to keep on in your wicked rebellion, 'according to your hard and impenitent heart, treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath.' 'To-day'—the word of God says, 'to-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart.' A sinner is *always* hardening, when he is

intentionally delaying; because he is sinning by disobedience, and sin always hardens. Your mind was relieved by what he told you?"

"Very much. I have felt more at peace since."

"The peace of the wicked! peace in sin! peace, without Christ! peace, while there is no peace! peace, while exposed to eternal perdition!"

He smiled at this; though I spake with the utmost solemnity; and I left him. I saw him many times afterwards; but he seemed to have turned his face towards the world. His attention to religion continued for a little while; but it was not long, before all appearances of seriousness had left him. He soon became one of the most stupid and indifferent sinners I have ever seen; and continued to be so, as long as I knew him. I have not a doubt, that his interview with that man, (who was an excellent member of my church,) helped to dissipate his serious impressions. His heart seized upon an idea presented to him, and misinterpreted it, and wrought it into an excuse. The idea presented to him, beyond all question, was the idea, that he ought not to despair in God, but keep on 'striving to enter in at the strait gate'—not to keep on, in his impenitence. But he took it as a sedative to his conscience. The directions of God's word are the only safe directions for inquiring sinners. The more accurately we see their hearts, the more appropriately we may bring

scripture truths to bear upon them. In this perception of their state and this application of divine truth, consists the skill of any one, who would guide them to Christ. There is no reason to believe, that the Holy Spirit ever leaves awakened sinners; only as *they* leave the truth of God, for some error, or some sin. Truth is the Spirit's instrumentality. 'Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth.' We never should cease to cry to a sinner, *flee, flee*; till, safe within the city of refuge, he cannot be reached, by the sword of the avenger of blood.

## THE WHOLE HEART.



IN the early part of my ministry, I was requested by a clergyman to attend a meeting for religious inquiry, and converse with the young men who were there. I spake to each one separately. Nothing occurred to impress the circumstance particularly on my memory. Twenty years afterwards, I met with a clergyman, who called up my recollection of that meeting. Said he; "I was there, and you spake to me. Do you remember what you said?" I had no recollection of the particulars. "Well, I have," said he; "and I will tell you how it was. I have long wanted to tell you. You asked me, if I was seeking the Lord, and I told you that I was trying to. You asked me, if my trying had done me any good; and I answered, that I did not know as it had. You told me then, that you could tell me the reason why it had *not*: the reason was, that I had sought with only a part of my heart. You went on to say



to me, you must search with all your heart, not half of it: 'Ye shall seek me and ye shall find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart?' I wondered you said *that*. I thought I *was* seeking with all my heart. But this idea, 'with all your heart,' remained with me. I could not get rid of it; and finally I found out, that this was exactly my difficulty. I had been seeking for months, but with a part of my heart only. Your words, '*all your heart, all your heart,*' led me into the knowledge of my character, and into the right way. I have often thought of that meeting; and wondered, that you should know me so well.—That circumstance has since been of great use to me, in conversing with anxious inquirers."

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Ministers must sometimes draw their bow at a venture. But it is better to take aim. There are *some* scripture arrows, which we should always have in our quiver, because they are sure to hit. They will at least ring upon the harness, if they do not penetrate the joints. They will alarm if they do not kill.—After we have "toiled all night and taken nothing;" if we cast our net on the right side of the ship, it will not come in empty. There is but one way to Christ. Faith saves: the Faith of the whole heart. Jesus, save me—or I die!

## THE WELSH WOMAN AND HER TENANT.



A MAN, who was entirely a stranger to me, and whose appearance convinced me he was poor, and whose address showed, that he was not very familiar with the subject of religion, called upon me one morning; and with some agitation desired me to go to a distant street, to see his wife, who was sick. On making some inquiries; I learned, that his wife had the consumption, was not expected to live many days, had not expressed any desire to see me; but that he had come for me, at the request of an aged Welsh woman, who lived in the same house. I immediately went to the place he described. I found the woman apparently in the last stages of the consumption. She was an interesting young woman, of about twenty years of age, and had been married a little more than a year. All the appearance of her room was indicative of poverty, though everything manifested the most perfect neatness. She was bolstered up,

upon her bed, her face pale, with a bright red spot in the centre of each cheek. She appeared exceedingly weak; while her frequent cough seemed to be tearing her to pieces. Her condition affected me. Manifestly, her youth and beauty were destined to an early grave. She must soon leave the world; and how tender and terrible the thought, that she might still be unprepared for a happier one!

As I told her who I was, and why I had come there; she offered me her hand, with a ready and easy politeness; and yet, with a manifest embarrassment of feeling, which she evidently struggled to conceal.

I have seldom seen a more perfectly beautiful woman. Her frame was delicate, her complexion clear and white, her countenance indicative of a more than ordinary degree of intelligence and amiability; and as she lifted her languid eyes upon me, I could not but feel in an instant, that I was in the presence of an uncommon woman.

I felt her feverish pulse, which was rapidly beating, and expressing my sorrow at finding her so ill, she said to me, (speaking with some difficulty:)—

“ You find me—in very humble circumstances—sir.”

“ Yes,” said I, “ you seem very sick.”

“ We have not—always been—so straitened as

we are now," said she.—“ We lived—very comfortably—before—I was sick. But, I am not able—to do anything, now. And I am ashamed—to have you find me—with my room, and all things—in such a state ;” (casting a look about the room.) “ Once—I could have seen you in a more inviting place.—But, sir—we are now—very poor—and cannot live—as we used to.—My situation—is—very humble—indeed.”

“ You have no occasion to be ashamed,” said I. “ Your room is very neat ; and if you are in want of anything, it will give me pleasure to aid you to whatever you need.”

“ Oh, sir, I am not—in want—of anything now. I am too sick to need anything—more than the old lady—can do for me ; and she is—very kind.”

“ And who is the old lady ?” I asked.

“ Mrs. Williams,” said she ; “ in whose house—we have lived since ours—was sold ;—the woman that—wanted me to have you—come and see me. She has been—talking—to me about religion ;—(she is a Welsh—woman ;—) and she has read—to me—in the Bible, but—I cannot—understand it.”

“ And did you *wish* to have me come and see you ?”

“ No—yes—I am willing—to see you ; but—I am—in such—a place here—my room—”

“My dear friend,” said I, “do not *think* of such things at all. You have something of more moment to think of. You are very sick. Do you expect ever to get well?”

“No, sir; they—tell me—I shall not.”

“And do you feel prepared to die?”

“I do not know—what that—preparation—means. And, it is too late, now, for me to do anything—about it.—I am too far—gone.”

“No, Madam, *you are not*. God is infinitely merciful; and you may be saved. Have you been praying to him to save you?”

“I never—prayed. Indeed, sir,—I never thought—of religion, till I was—sick, and the old lady talked—to me. But I cannot—understand her. I have never—read the Bible.—I never was inside—of a church—in my life. Nobody—ever asked me—to go, or told me—I ought to. I did not think—of religion. I just lived to enjoy—myself—as well—as I could. My aunt—who took me—when my mother—died, never went—to church, and never said anything—to me about religion.—So I lived—as she—allowed me to, from the time I was three years old.—I had property—enough for everything—I wanted—then; and after I left—school—about four years ago,—I had nothing—to do—but to go to parties—and dances—and attend to—my dress, and read—till—I was married.—Since that—we have

had trouble.—My husband—I suppose—did not understand things—in our country—very well. He mortgaged—my house, and in a little while—it was sold—and we were—obliged—to leave it, and come here.”

“What did you read?” said I.

“Oh, I read novels; the most of the time—sometimes—I read other books; but—not much, except—some history, and biography.”

“Did you never read the Bible?”

“No, sir.”

“Have you got a Bible?”

“No, sir. The old lady—has got one—which she brings to me; but I am too weak—to read it.—It is a large book; and I—shall not live—long enough to read it.”

“You need *not* read it,” said I.—“But now suffer me to talk to you plainly. You are very sick. You may not live long. *Will* you give your attention to religion, as well as you can, in your weak state; and aim to get ready to die?”

“I would, sir—if I had time. But I do not—know anything—at all—about religion—and it would do me—no good—to try now, when I have—so little time—left.”

“You have *time enough* left.”

“Do you—think so—sir?”

“I *know* you have, Madam.”

She turned her eyes upon me, imploringly, and

yet despondingly ; and with a voice trembling with emotion, she said to me, speaking slowly and with difficulty :—

“ Sir, I cannot—believe that.—I have never *begun*—to learn religion.—I lived only for my—present enjoyment—till I was married ; and since that, after—my husband—failed—all I have thought of—was to save—some little—of my property—if I could ; so as not to—be a burden—to other people.—And now,—there cannot—be time—enough left—for me—to begin with religion—and go—all the way through.”

“ *There is time enough,*” said I.

Perceiving that she was already exhausted by her efforts to speak ; I told her to rest for a few minutes, and I would see her again. I went into another room to see “ the old lady,” (as she called her,) whom I found to be a pious Welsh woman, who had rented a part of her house to the sick woman’s husband, some months before, and who now devoted herself to take care of the poor sufferer. The tenant had squandered all his wife’s property ; and now during her sickness, continued his dissipation, paying little attention to his dying wife. If he ever *had* a heart, rum had destroyed it.

“ She is a good creature,” said the Welsh woman, “ all but religion. When she was well, she was very kind to me. Though she was a

*lady*, and had fine clothes, she was not ashamed to come and sit with me, an hour at a time, and talk to me and try to make me happy ; for I am a poor, lone widow, seventy years old ; and all my children are dead ; and when I told her how it was with me, that I had nothing to live upon, but the rent I got for the rooms of my house ; and she found out, (*I did not tell her of it,*) that her husband did not pay the rent any longer ; she sold her rings and some of her clothes, and brought me the money, poor thing, and told me to take it. I did not know, at first, that she sold her rings and her clothes to get it ; and when I asked her how she got it, and she told me, I said to her I would not have it, it would burn my fingers if I took it, and the rust of it would eat my flesh, as it were fire, and be a canker in my heart, and be a swift witness against me in the day of the great God, our Saviour. So I gave it back to her ; but she would not take it : she laid it down there,—(pointing to it with her finger,—) “ on the mantle-piece,—it is five weeks yesterday,—and there it has been ever since. I cannot touch it. I *never will* touch it, unless I am forced to take it to buy her a coffin. Christ Jesus would not have taken the price of a lady’s rings and clothes, in such a case ; and it is not for the like of me to do it. Poor thing ! she will soon die, and then she will want rings and clothes no longer ! Oh, sir ! if I



could only think she would wear robes of glory in heaven I would not weep so. But I am afraid it is all too late for her now! Religion is a hard business for a poor, sick sinner! And her husband would not go for you, week before last, nor last week. He *never* went till this morning, when I told him, as I was a living woman, he never should enter the house to-night,—he should sleep in the street, if he did not bring you here before the clock struck twelve. I want you to pray for her. There is no telling what God may do. May be he will send suddenly. But *I* cannot tell her the way. I have tried. I tried hard; but, poor thing, she said she could not understand me. And then, I could do nothing but come to my room and weep for her, and go to prayer, and then weep again. I am glad you have come. And now *don't leave her*, till you have prayed and got a *blessing*,—if it is not too late.”

I have seldom heard eloquence surpassing that of “the old lady.” Some of her expressions were singular, but they seemed to have in them the majesty and tenderness of both nature and religion.

I borrowed the “old lady’s” Bible; and returned to the sick woman’s room. Seating myself by the side of her bed, I told her I did not wish her to talk, for it wearied her. But I wanted she should listen to me, without saying a word, only if she

did not understand me, she might say so, and I would explain myself.

“*Can* I understand?”—said she, (with a look of mingled earnestness and despair.)

“Certainly you can. Religion is all simple and easy, if one desires to know it; and if you do *not* understand me, it is *my* fault, not *yours*.”

“And now, my dear child; listen to me, a little while. I will not be long. But first allow me to pray with you, for a single minute.”

After prayer, I took the Bible, and told her it was God’s word, given to us to teach us the way to eternal life and happiness beyond the grave;—that it taught all I knew, or needed to know about salvation;—that though it was a large book, and contained many things, which might be profitable to her under other circumstances; yet, all that she needed to think of just now, was embraced in a few ideas, which were easy to be understood;—and I wanted her to listen to them, and try to understand them.

“I will—sir,” said she, “as well—as I can.”

“Hear what God says then,” said I.

“The first thing is—that *we are sinners*.” I explained sin. I explained the Law which it transgressed, how it is holy, just and good; and we have broken it, because we have not loved the Lord our God with all our heart, and our neighbor as ourselves.

“No, I have—never loved—him,” said she.

I dwelt upon our sin, as guilt and alienation from God; explained how sinners are worldly, proud, selfish; and read the texts as proofs and explanations,—“by the deeds of the Law shall no flesh be justified—the carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the Law of God.” In short, that man is, in himself, a lost sinner; God is angry with him, and he has a wicked heart.

Said she, “That seems—strange—to me; I wish—I had known it—before.”

“The *second* thing is—that just such sinners may be saved, because Jesus Christ came to seek and to save the lost. I read from the Bible, ‘God so loved the world that he gave his own Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities. The chastisement of our peace was upon him. The Lord hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all.’ You see, therefore, that sinners can be saved. Christ died for them.”

“Will he—save *me*?” said she.

“I hope he will—but listen to me.—The *third* thing is, that lost sinners will be saved by Christ, if they repent of sin and believe in him.” I continued to select texts and read

them to her. "God now commandeth all men everywhere to repent. Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe in his name. Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness to every one that believeth. Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow, though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

As I read such passages, turning over the leaves of the book, as I stood by her bed-side; her eyes followed the turning leaves, and she gazed upon the book in astonishment. At times, when repeating a peculiar text, my eyes rested on her face instead of the book, and then she would ask, "Is that in God's word?" I found it best, therefore, just to look on the book, and read slowly and deliberately.

"The *fourth* thing is, that we need the aid of the Holy Spirit to renew our hearts, and bring us to faith and repentance. 'Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. No man can come unto me, except the Father which sent me draw him. In me is thy help. Let him take hold on my strength, that he may make peace with me, and he shall make peace with me.' Man is *helpless* without the Holy Spirit.

“The last thing is, that all this salvation is freely offered to us *now, to-day*, and it is our duty and interest to accept it on the spot, and just as we are, undone sinners. ‘Hear and your soul shall live. Seek ye the Lord while he may be found. Call ye upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God for he will abundantly pardon. If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him. Behold now is the accepted time; behold now is the day of salvation. Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. The Spirit and the bride say, come; and let him that is athirst come; and let him that heareth say, come; and whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely.’

“Now, my dear child, this is all; only these five things. I will now leave you for an hour, to rest, and then I will be back to see you.”

In an hour I returned, determined to go over the same things; and explain them, if needful, more fully. As I entered the room she looked at me with a gladsome smile, and yet with an intense earnestness, which for an instant I feared was insanity. Said she, “I am so glad you have

come ;—I have been—thinking—of what you read—to me. These things—must be true ; but—I don't know—as I should—believe them, if they were not—in the word—of God. I understand some—of them.—I know I am—a sinner—I feel it. I never knew it—so before.—I have not—loved God. I have been—wicked and foolish. I am—undone. And now—when I know it, my heart—is so bad, that instead of—loving God—it shrinks from—him,—and I am afraid—it is too—late—for me !”

“ Yes,” said I ; “ your heart is worse than you think. You can make it no better. Give it to God. Trust Christ to pardon all. He died for just such lost sinners.”

“ Yes, sir,—I remember—that ; but—what is it—to believe ? I do not—understand *that—thing*.—You said I must repent of sin,—and must *believe*—in Jesus Christ.—I think that I understand one—of these things. To repent is to be sorry for my sin,—and to leave it. But—what is it—to *believe* ?—I cannot—understand that.—What is believing—in Jesus Christ ?”

“ It is trusting him to save you. It is receiving him, as your own offered Saviour, and giving yourself to him, as a helpless sinner, to be saved by his mercy. He died to atone for sinners.”

“ I believe that,—for God's word—says so.—Is this—all the faith—that I must have ?”

“ No ; not at all. You must have more. You must *trust* him. You must receive him as *your own* Saviour, and give yourself to him. You may remember the passage I read to you. Here it is in God’s word :—‘ As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name ’ You see that, here, ‘ believing ’ and ‘ receiving ’ express the same thing. You are to take Christ as God offers him to you ; and you are to rely on him to save you. That is faith.”

“ Sir,—I am afraid—I can never—understand it,” said she, the tears coursing over her pale cheek.

“ Yes, you *can*. It is very simple. There are only two things about it. Take Christ for your own, and give yourself to him to be his. Sometimes these two things are put together in the Bible, as when a happy believer says, ‘ my beloved is mine, and I am his.’ It is union with Christ, as if he were your husband, and you were his bride.”

“ Oh ! sir,—it is all dark to me !—Faith—I cannot—understand it !”

“ See here, my dear child. If you were here on this island, and it was going to sink ; you would be in a sad condition, if you could not get off. There would be no hope for you, if you had no help. You would sink with the island. You

could not save yourself. You might get down by the shore, and know and feel the necessity of being over on the other side, quickly, before the island should go down. But you could not get there alone. There is a wide river betwixt you and the place of safety, where you wish to go. It is so deep, that you could not wade it. It is so wide and rapid, that you could not swim it. Your case would be hopeless, if there was no help for you. You would be lost!—But there is a boat there. You see it, going back and forth, carrying people over, where they want to go. People tell you it is safe, and you have only to go on it. It seems safe to you, as you behold it in motion. You believe it is safe.—Now what do you do, in such a case? You just *step on board the boat*. You do not merely *believe*, it would save you, if you were on it; but *you go* on it. You commit yourself to it. When you get on; you do not work, or walk, or run, or ride. You do *nothing, but one*. *You take care not to fall off*. That is all. You just trust to the boat, to hold you up from sinking, and to carry you over, where you want to go. Just so, trust yourself to Jesus Christ to save you. He will carry you to heaven. Venture on him now. He waits to take you.”

“ But—*will* he save—such—a wicked—undone creature—as I am ?”

“ *Yes; he will*. He *says* he will. He came



from heaven to do it; 'to seek and to save that which was lost.' He invites you to come to him. I read it to you in his word; 'come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.'"

"May *I* go?" says she, (her countenance indicating the most intense thought; and her eyes, suffused with tears of gladness and doubt, fixing upon me, as if she would read her doom from my lips.)

"Yes, you may go to Christ. Come in welcome. Come now. Come just such a sinner as you are. Christ loves to save such sinners."

She raised herself upon her couch, and leaning upon her elbow, with her dark locks falling over the snowy whiteness of her neck, her brow knit, her lips compressed, her fine eyes fixed upon me, and her bosom heaving with emotion,—she paused for a moment,—said she:—

"I do want—to come to Christ."

"He wants you to come," said I.

"Will he—*take—me*?" said she.

"Yes, he will; he *says* he will," said I.

"I am wicked—and do not—deserve it," said she.

"He knows that; and died to save you," said I.

"Oh, I think—I would come, if God,—if the Holy Spirit—would help—me. But—my heart—is *afraid*. I thought,—just now; if I only knew

—the way, I *would* do it. But now, when—you have told me; I cannot believe it. I cannot—trust Christ. I never—knew before; what—a distant heart I have!”

“The Holy Spirit does help you. At this moment in your heart, he urges you to come, to trust Christ. The Bible tells you to come. ‘The Spirit and the bride say, come.’ God lengthens the hours of your life, that you may come; while he says to you, ‘Behold now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation.’”

I paused for a little time; and as I watched her countenance, she appeared to be absorbed in the most intense thought. Her brow was slightly knit—her lips quivered—her fine eyes roamed from side to side, and often upwards; and then, closed, for a moment. And seeming utterly forgetful of my presence, she slowly pronounced the words, with a pause almost at every syllable;—“lost sinner—anger—God—Christ—blood—love—pardon—heaven—help—Bible—now—come.” And then, turning her eyes upon me, she said:

“I do want—to come—to Christ—and rest on him.—If my God—will accept—such—a vile sinner—I give myself—to him—forever!—oh!—he will—accept me—by Christ—who died!—Lord—save me—I lie on thee—to save me.”

She sunk back upon her bed, with her eyes lifted to heaven, and her hands raised in the attitude

of prayer ; while her countenance indicated amazement.

I knelt by her bed, uttered a short prayer, and left her, to return at sunset.

As I returned, the old Welsh woman met me at the door, her eyes bathed in tears, and her hands lifted to the heavens. I supposed she was going to tell me that the sick woman was dead ; but, with uplifted hands, she exclaimed, “ Blessed be God ! blessed be God ! The poor thing is happy now ; she is so happy ! Thank God ! she is so happy ! She looks like an angel now ! She has seen Christ, her Lord ; and she will be an angel soon ! Now I can let her die ! I can’t stop weeping ! She has been a dear creature to me ! But it makes my heart weep for joy now, when I see what God has done for her, and how happy she is.”

She conducted me to her sick friend’s room. As I entered, the dying woman lifted her eyes upon me, with a smile :—

“ The Lord—has made me happy !—I ‘am—very happy. I was afraid—my wicked heart—never would—love God. But, he has—led me to it. Christ—is very dear—to me. I can—lean on him now. I—can die—in peace.”

I conversed with her for some minutes, the “ old lady” standing at my elbow, in tears. She was calm and full of peace. She said, “ All you

told me—was true ; my heart finds it true.—How good—is Jesus, to save such sinners !—I was afraid—to fall upon him ; but I know now—that believing is all. My heart—is different. I do love God. Jesus Christ is very dear—to me.”

She appeared to be fast sinking. I prayed with her, and left her. The next day she died. I visited her before her death. She was at peace. She could say but little ; but some of her expressions were remarkable. She desired to be bolstered up in her bed, that she might “ be able to speak once more.” She seemed to rally her strength ; and speaking with the utmost difficulty, the death-gurgle in her throat, and the tears coursing down her pale, and still beautiful cheek, she said :—

“ I *wonder*—at God.—Never was there such love.—He is all goodness.—I want—to praise—him.—My soul—loves him. I delight—to be his.—He—has forgiven me—a poor sinner—and now—his love exhausts me.—The Holy Spirit—helped me—or my heart—would have held—to its own—goodness—in its unbelief.—God has—heard me.—He has come—to me,—and now—I live—on prayer.—Pardon me—sir,—I forgot—to thank you—I was—so carried off—in thinking—of my God.—He will—reward you—for coming—to see me.—I am going—to him—soon—I hope.

—Dying will be sweet—to me—for Christ—is with me.”

I said a few words to her, prayed with her, and left her. As I took her hand, at that last farewell, she cast upon me a beseeching look, full of tenderness and delight, saying to me: “May I hope—you—will always—go to see—dying sinners?”—It was impossible for me to answer audibly;—she answered for me;—“I know—you will—farewell.”

She continued to enjoy entire composure of mind till the last moment. Almost her last words to the “old lady” were, “My delight is—that God—is king—over all, and saves sinners—by Jesus Christ.”

I called at the house after she was dead, and proposed to the “old lady” that I would procure a sexton, and be at the expense of her funeral; lifting both her hands towards the heavens, she exclaimed,—“*No, sir!* indeed; *no, sir!* You wrong my heart to think of it! God sent you here at my call; and the poor thing has died in peace. My old *heart* would turn against me, if I should allow *you* to bury her! the midnight thought would torment me! She has been a dear creature to me, and died such a sweet death. I shall make her shroud with my own hands; I shall take her ring-money to buy her coffin; I shall pay for her grave; and then, as I believe her

dear spirit has become a ministering angel, I shall hope she will come to me in the nights, and carry my prayer back to her Lord."

She had it all in her own way; and we buried her with a tenderness of grief, which I am sure has seldom been equalled.

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If this was a conversion at all, it was a death-bed conversion. A suspicion or fear may justly attach to such instances perhaps; and persons wiser than myself have doubted the propriety of publishing them to the world. But the instance of the thief on the cross is published to us; and if the grace of God does sometimes reach an impenitent sinner on the bed of death; why should we greatly fear the influence of its true history? The wicked may indeed abuse it, as they abuse everything that is good and true; but it must be an amazingly foolish abuse, if on account of a few such instances, they are induced to neglect religion, till they come to die. It is very rare that a death-bed is like this.

I deemed it very important to convince her it was not too late to seek the Lord; and I found it a very difficult thing. The truth, that it was not too late, came into conflict with the unbelief and deceitfulness of her heart. It seems to me,

that we ought not to limit the Holy One of Israel, leading sinners to believe, that even a death-bed lies beyond hope. Truth is always safe; error, never. And if there is good evidence of a death-bed conversion, why should it be kept out of sight?

And yet it is no wonder that careful minds are led to distrust sick-bed repentance. It seldom holds out. Manifestly, it is commonly nothing but deception. Health brings back the former impiety, or that which is worse.

It does not appear, that the dying thief knew anything about the Saviour, till he *was* dying; and this woman seems to have been like him. And what a lesson of reproof to Christians, that this woman, living for twenty years among them, and in the sight of five or six Christian churches, should “never have been inside of a church in her life,” and that “nobody asked her to go.” Year after year, she was in habits of intimacy with those, who belonged in Christian families; she associated with the children of Christian parents; and yet, she never had a Bible—she never read the Bible—she never was exhorted to seek the Lord! And probably she would have died as she had lived; had not divine Providence sent her, in her poverty, to be the tenant of the “old lady,” who loved her so well. Oh! how many are likely to die soon, with no “old lady” to bring them the Bible, and pray for them in faith and love!

## THE HOLY SPIRIT RESISTED.



As I was riding through a village, in which I was almost a stranger ; I saw a number of young people entering a school-house. The clergyman of the place was standing by the door. He beckoned to me to stop. He told me he had appointed a meeting for inquiry, and was surprised to find so many assembling. He wished me to go in, and have some conversation with those who were there. I asked to be excused, as I was on my way to fulfil an engagement, where I *must be* punctually at the time. He would not excuse me, I *must* stop, if it were “only for five minutes.”

He conducted me into a room, where were fifteen young women ;—“Say *something*,” said he ; “to every one of them.” I did ; though I was not in the room ten minutes. At the same time, he was conversing with some young men in another apartment.

As I passed from one to another, in this rapid



conversation; I came to a young lady about twenty years of age, whose countenance indicated great agitation of feeling. Said I; "Do you feel, that you are a sinner, unreconciled to God?"

"Yes, I do; I am a *lost sinner!*"

"Can you save *yourself?*"

"None, but Christ can save *me!*"

"Why then don't you come to him? He is willing to save you; he *loves* to save sinners like you."

"Indeed, I do not know! my heart is hard and wicked; and I am afraid I never shall be saved!" —She burst into tears, which she had seemed anxious to suppress; and buried her face in her handkerchief.

"How long have you been in such deep trouble of mind?"

"For three weeks," said she, sobbing aloud.

"Then, *for three weeks you have done nothing but resist the Holy Spirit!*"

I left her and passed to the next individual. In a few minutes I left the room, and went on my way.

The next week, as I was riding in a carriage alone, a few miles from the same village; I saw before me a young gentleman and a young lady in a carriage, riding in an opposite direction; and I was just meeting them. She appeared to be trying to induce him to stop; and he did not seem to

understand what she wanted. She finally took hold of the reins herself, stopped the horse, and motioning to me, I reined up also; and we sat in our carriages, face to face, and close together.—“That was true—that was true, sir,” said she.

“What was true?” said I. (For I did not know who she was, though I recognized her face as one that I had seen.)

“What you told me at the inquiry meeting that morning; that I had done nothing for three weeks but resist the Holy Spirit. That expression pierced my very heart. I did not believe it. I thought I was *yielding* to the Holy Spirit, because I was anxious, and had begun to seek the Lord; and I thought you was *most cruel* to speak to me so. I did not believe you, but I could not get the idea out of my mind. It clung to me night and day, ‘for three weeks you have done nothing but resist the Holy Spirit.’ That expression opened my eyes. And I could not let you pass us here, without stopping to tell you how much I thank you for it.”

She said this very rapidly, her eyes swimming with tears, and her countenance beaming with joy. Her whole heart seemed to be embarked in what she was saying.

By this time I fully recognized her, and recollected my former hurried interview with her. For a few minutes I conversed with her, as we sat in

our carriages. She hoped that God had given her a new heart. She was at peace not only, but full of joy. "Oh I am happy," said she, "I am so happy. You opened my eyes. You told me just the truth. I thought you was a cruel man. I wanted you to explain yourself; but you would not stop to hear me. As I reflected on what you said, I hated you with all my heart. But the words would come up, 'for three weeks you have done nothing but resist the Holy Spirit.' It seems to me now, that if you had said anything else, or made any explanation as I wanted you to; I should not have been led to Christ,—I can never thank you enough for the words which showed me my very heart."

I have not seen her since.—I learned, that a few weeks afterwards she made a public profession of religion. Her pastor told me, that he esteemed her highly, as one of the most intelligent and accomplished of his flock. She belonged to a very excellent family. She possessed a discriminating mind; and did she err in thinking, that for three weeks she had done nothing but resist the Holy Spirit?

## THE HEART PROMISED.



ONE of the most perplexing, and to me distressing instances of continued and ineffectual seriousness, that I have ever known, was that of a young woman, who seemed to me to be as near perfection, as any person that I have ever known. She was about twenty years old, of good mind, and more than ordinary intelligence. Everybody that knew her loved her. She had been religiously educated, and was of a very sober and thoughtful disposition, though uniformly cheerful. She became interested on the subject of religion, and attended the meeting for religious inquiry, week after week. In personal conversation with her at her house, I aimed repeatedly to remove all her difficulties of mind, and explain to her the way of salvation. She appeared to understand and believe all that was said to her. Her convictions of sin seemed to be clear and deep. That she could be justified only through faith in Christ, she had

no doubt. Of his power and readiness to save her, if she would come to him, she had not a doubt. She deeply felt that she needed the aids of the Holy Spirit, and seemed to realize with peculiar solemnity, that the Holy Spirit was striving with her. Her seriousness continued for weeks; and while others around her were led to rejoicing in the Lord, her mind remained without peace or hope. I exercised all my skill to ascertain her hindrances, to show her the state she was in, and lead her to Christ. It was all in vain. There she stood, left almost alone. Her condition distressed me. I had said everything to her that I could think of, which I supposed adapted to her state of mind. I had referred her to numerous passages in the Bible, and explained them to her most carefully. She had no objections to make. She heard all I said to her, with apparent docility and manifest thankfulness; and yet, she said she was as far from the kingdom of heaven as ever, her heart was unmoved, and enmity against God.

Just at this period, I accidentally met her one morning in the street. I was sorry to meet her, for I thought I must say something to her; I had said all, and I knew not what to say. Offering her my hand, I asked, "Sarah, have you given your heart to God?"

"No, sir," said she tremulously.

"Don't you think you ought to?"

“ I *know*, I *ought* to.”

“ Do you *mean* to do so ?”

“ Yes, sir, I do.”

“ Don’t you think you ought to do it *to-day* ?”

“ Yes, I do.”

“ Then *will* you ?”

“ Yes, *I will*,” said she, emphatically.

“ Good-bye,” said I ; and instantly left her.

A day or two afterwards I saw her, and she had wanted very much to see me ; she wanted to tell me how she felt, and how she had been affected. She said, that she had never felt so before,—that her mind was at rest—that she now loved God—that his character and law appeared to her most excellent, worthy of all admiration and love—that she could now trust in the blood of Christ, and wondered she had never done it before. She partly hoped, though she scarcely dared to hope, that her heart was renewed by the Holy Spirit.—“ But,” said she, “ after I made you that promise, I would have given all the world, if I had not made it. I hunted after you to take back my promise ; but I could not find you. The thought of it haunted me. It distressed me beyond measure. I wondered at myself for being so rash as to make it ; but I dared not break it. I had a dreadful struggle with myself, to give up all into the hands of God ; but I am glad of it now.”

“Then you think,” said I, “that you have done something very acceptable to him?”

“Oh no! not *I!* *I* have done nothing. But I hope God has done something for me. All *I* could do, was to tell him I could do nothing, and pray him to help me.”

She united with the church, and yet honors her profession.

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This is the only case, in which I have ever led any person to make such a promise. I doubt the propriety of doing it. I did not really intend it, in this instance. I was led into it at the time, by the nature of our conversation, and the solicitude I felt for one, to whom I knew not what to say.

The resolutions of an unconverted sinner are one thing, and the operations of the Holy Spirit are quite another. They may coincide indeed; and if such resolutions are made in the spirit of a humble reliance on God, they may be beneficial: “I will arise and go to my father,” was no improper purpose. But if such resolutions are made in self-reliance, they are rash, and will seldom be redeemed. Sarah seems to have found herself insufficient for keeping her promise. “All I could do, was to tell him I could do nothing, and pray him to help me.”

If any one thinks that he has turned to God without the special aids of the Holy Spirit; it is probable, that he has never turned to God at all. Certainly, he cannot sing, "He sent from above: he took me, he drew me out of many waters; he delivered me from my strong enemy."



## FIXED DESPAIR.



THERE was in my congregation, at one time, a woman about forty years of age, who was a subject of wonder to me. She was one of the most intelligent and well educated of the people; she had been brought up from her childhood in the family of a clergyman, as his daughter; she was very attentive to the observance of the Sabbath; she was never absent from her seat in the church. As the mother of a family, she had few equals. Everybody respected her. But she was not a member of the church. And whenever I had endeavored to call her attention to the subject of religion, she was so reserved, that I could not even conjecture what was her particular state of mind. I was told that she never spake to any one, in respect to her religious feelings.

My ignorance of her views and feelings led me to be in doubt, what to say to her. I felt that I was groping in the dark, every time I attempted

to converse with her. Sometimes I suspected, that she secretly indulged a hope in Christ, though she told me to the contrary. At other times, I suspected, that she was relying upon her perfectly moral life for salvation, though she denied this also.

I could not persuade her to seek the Lord ; nor could I ascertain what was her hindrance. And I was the more surprised at this, on account of the profound respect which she appeared to have for religion ; and her deep solemnity whenever I spoke to her on the subject. I had hoped, that by conversation with her I might get a glimpse of her heart, that the peculiarity of her state of mind would casually become manifest ; and thus I should learn what it would be best for me to say to her. But she was too reserved for this. After several trials I was still in the dark. I did not know what she thought or felt—what it was, that kept her from attending to her salvation.

I called upon her, one day, and frankly told her my embarrassment about her. I mentioned her uniform taciturnity, my motive in aiming to overcome it, my supposition that some error kept her from religion, and my inability even to conjecture what it was. I said to her, that I had not a doubt, there was something locked up in her own mind, which she never whispered to me. She seemed very much surprised at this declaration ;

and I instantly asked her, if it was not so. With some reluctance she confessed it was. And then, after no little urgency, she said she would tell me the whole, not on her own account, but that *her* case might not discourage me from aiming to lead others to Christ.

She then said, that her day of grace was past—that she had had every possible opportunity for salvation—that every possible motive had a thousand times been presented to her—that she had been the subject of deep convictions and anxiety often—that she had lived through three remarkable revivals of religion, in which many of her companions had been led to Christ—that she had again and again attempted to work out her salvation; but all in vain. “I know my day is gone by,” said she. “I am given over. The Holy Spirit has left me.”

She spake this in a decided manner, solemnly and coldly, unmoved as a rock! It surprised me. And as I was silently thinking for a moment, how I could best remove her error; she went on to say, that she had never before now mentioned this, for a number of years—that she fully believed in the reality of experimental religion—that she believed all that she had ever heard me preach; except when once or twice, I had spoken of religious despair—that, as her day of grace was past, she did not wish to have her mind troubled on the sub-

ject of religion at all—and asked me to say nothing more to her about it.

I inquired how long she had been in this state of mind. She told me she had known for eighteen years, that there was no salvation for her. I inquired if she ever prayed. She said she had not prayed in eighteen years. I inquired if she did not feel unhappy to be in such a state. She said she seldom thought of it—it would do no good—and she never intended to think of it again. I asked :—

“Do you believe the heart is deceitful?”

“Yes, I *know* it.”

“It may be, then, that your wicked heart has deceived *you*, in respect to your day of grace.”

This idea appeared to stagger her, for a moment; but she replied,

“No; I am not deceived.”

“Yes; you are.”

“No; I am not. Nothing can save me now: and I do not wish to have my mind disturbed by any more thought about it.”

“Why do you attend church?”

“Only to set a good example. I believe in religion as firmly as you do; and wish my children to be Christians.”

“Do you pray for *them*?”

“No; prayer from me would not be heard.”

“Madam,” said I, emphatically, “you are in

an error. I know you are. And I can convince you of it. If you will hear me, lend me your mind, and speak frankly to me, and tell me the grounds on which your despair rests, I will convince you, that you are entirely deceived. I cannot do it now. It would take too long. You have so long been in this state, and have fortified your error by so many other deceptions; that it will take some days to demolish the defences you have heaved up around you. But I can do it. If your mind will adhere to a thing once proved to you—if when a thing is *fixed*, your mind will let it *stay* fixed, and not just have the same doubt *after* the demonstration, that it had before it; I am perfectly certain you may be led to see your error. May I come to see you again about it?"

"I had rather not see you. It will do no good. It will only make me miserable. I did not intend to tell you how I felt; but when you found out, that something was concealed, I would not deceive you. But I wish to hear no more about it. *My* day of grace is past forever."

"No, it is *not*," said I, most emphatically. "Your deceitful heart has only seized on that idea, as an *excuse for not coming to repentance*.—Allow me, at least, to come and see you."

"I had rather not, sir."

"Madam, you must! *I cannot* leave you so! I will not! I love you too well to do it. I ask it

as a personal favor to myself; and I shall not think you have treated me politely, if you refuse it. May I see you a little while to-morrow?"

"I will *see* you,—if you so much desire it."

"I thank you, my dear lady. You have greatly gratified me. You will yet believe what I have said to you. I *know* you can be *saved*. And you know *me* well enough to know, that I am not the man to make such strong declarations rashly. All I ask is the opportunity to convince you. I will see you to-morrow."

In all this conversation, she seemed as unmoved as a stone. She did not shed a tear, or heave a sigh. She could talk about the certainty of her eternal misery, as if her heart were ice.

The next day when I called, I asked to know the reasons or evidences on which her dreadful opinion rested. She told me one after another, referring to many texts of scripture; and did it with a coldness which made me shudder. Of the certainty of her eternal enmity to God, and her eternal misery, she reasoned so coolly, that I almost felt I was listening to words from the lips of a corpse!

Perceiving that she would probably decline seeing me again, and wanting time to study her case more carefully, I suddenly took leave of her. I had expected the old affair of the "unpardonable

sin," or "sin against the Holy Ghost;" but I found a far more difficult matter.

I called again. Evidently she was sorry to see me. But I gave her no time to make any objections. I desired her to listen to me, and not yield her assent to what I was going to say, if she could reasonably avoid it. I then took up her evidences of being forever given over of God, beginning with the weakest of them; and in about an hour had disposed of several in such a way that she acknowledged her deception "in respect to them." "But," says she, "there are stronger ones left."

"We will attend to them hereafter," said I. "But remember, you have found your mistake in respect to *some*; therefore, it is possible you may be mistaken in respect to *others*."—This remark was the first thing that appeared to stagger her old opinion. She *said* nothing; but evidently her confidence was shaken.

I saw her time after time, about once a week, for five or six weeks; examined all her reasons for thinking her day of grace gone by, except one, and convinced her they were false. Evidently she had become *intellectually* interested. There was but one point left. She had never in all this time expressed a wish to see me, or asked me to call again. I now called her attention summarily to the ground we had gone over, and how she had

found all her refuges of lies swept away, save one, as she had herself acknowledged; and if that were gone she would think her salvation possible;—and then asked her if she *wished* to see me again.

She replied that her *opinion* was unchanged; but that she *should* like to hear what I had to say about this remaining point, which, (as she truly said,) I had avoided so often.

I called the next day. I took up the one point left—this last item which doomed her to despair; and as I examined it, reasoning with her, and asking if she thought me right, from step to step as I went on, the intensity of her thought became painful to me. She gazed upon me with unutterable astonishment. Her former cold and stone-like appearance was gone; her bosom heaved with emotion, and her whole frame seemed agitated with a new kind of life. To see the dreadful fixedness of despair melting away from her countenance, and the dawnings of inceptive hope taking its place, was a new and strange thing to me. It looked like putting life into a corpse. As my explanation and argument drew towards the close, she turned pale as death. She almost ceased to breathe. And when I had finished, and in answer to my question she confessed, that she had no reason to believe her day of grace was past,—instantly she looked as if she had waked up in a



new world. The tears gushed from her eyes in a torrent—she clasped her hands—sprung from her seat, and walked back and forth across the room, exclaiming, “I can be saved! I can be saved! I can be saved!” She was so entirely overcome, that I thought she would faint, or her reason give way. I dared not leave her. I said nothing, but remained till she became more composed, and took my leave with a silent bow.

The next Sunday evening, she was at the inquiry meeting. She appeared like other awakened sinners, nothing remarkable about her, except her very manifest determination to seek the Lord with all her heart.

In about three weeks, she became one of the happiest creatures in hope, that I ever saw. She afterwards united with the church, and yet lives a happy and decided believer.

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The gospel is addressed to hope. Despair must always be deaf to it. Entire despair is incompatible with seeking God. Despair cannot pray. The last effort of the devil seems to be, to drive sinners to despair. “We are saved by hope,” says the apostle.

Few errors are harmless. None are safe. Truth is never injurious. And I can have no sympathy with those ministers, who think an error may do an impenitent sinner good. Tricks are not truth.

## TOTAL DEPRAVITY.



ABOUT to call upon a young woman, to whom I had sometimes spoken on the subject of religion, but who uniformly appeared very indifferent; I began to consider what I should say to her. I recollected, that, although she had always been polite to me, yet she evidently did not like me; and therefore I deemed it my duty, if possible, not to allow her dislike to *me*, to influence her mind against religion. I recollected also, that I had heard of her inclination towards another denomination, whose religious sentiments were very different from my own; and I thought therefore, that I must take care not to awaken *prejudices*, but aim to reach her conscience and her heart. The most of her relatives and friends were members of my church, she had been religiously educated, was a very regular attendant upon divine worship; and I knew, therefore, that she must have considerable intellectual knowledge, on the subject of religion.

But she was a gay young woman, loved amusements and thoughtless society; and I supposed she would be very reluctant to yield any personal attention to her salvation, lest it should interfere with her pleasures. And beyond all this, I had heard, that she possessed a great share of independence, and the more her friends had urged her to attend to her salvation, the more she seemed resolved to neglect it.

I rang the bell, inquired for her, and she soon met me in the parlor. I immediately told her for what purpose I had called; and asked whether she was willing to talk with me on the subject of her religion. She replied:—

“I am willing to talk with you; but I don’t think as you do, about religion.”

“I do not ask you to think as I do. I may be wrong; but the word of God is right. I have not come here to intrude *my* opinions upon you, but to induce you to act agreeably to your own.”

“Yes,” she replied, (with a very significant toss of the head,) “you all *say* so. But if anybody ventures to differ from you, then they are ‘*heretics*,’ and ‘*reprobates*.’”

“I beg pardon, Miss S.—I really do not think you can say that of *me*.”

“Well—I mean—mother, and the rest of them; and I suppose you are just like them. If I *do* dif-

fer from you, I think I might be let alone, and left to my own way."

"Most certainly," said I, "if your own way is right."

"Well," says she, "I am a Unitarian."

"I am very glad to hear it; I did not know as you were anything."

"I mean," said she, "that I think more like the Unitarians, than like you."

"I doubt it," said I; "but, no matter. Never mind what *I* think. *I* am no rule for *you*. I do not ask you to think as *I* do. Let all that go. You may call me fool, or bigot, or—"

"You are no *fool*; but I think you are a *bigot*," says she.

"Very well," said I; "I am happy to find you so frank. And you—"

"Oh," said she, blushing, "I did not mean to say that; indeed I did not. That is too impudent."

"Not a bit," said I. "It is just right."

"Well," said she, "it is true that I *think* so; but it was not polite to *say* it."

"I thank you for saying it. But no matter what *I* am. I wish to ask you about yourself first; and then you may say anything to me that you please to say.—Do you believe the Bible?"

"Yes;—to be sure I do!" (Tartly.)

"Are you aiming to live according to it? For

example, are you daily praying to God to pardon and save you ?”

“ No !” said she ; (with an impudent accent.)

“ Does not the Bible command you to pray ? ‘ to seek the Lord while he may be found, and call upon him while he is near ? ’ ”

“ Yes, I know that ; but I don’t believe in total depravity.”

“ No matter. I do not ask you to believe in it. But I suppose you believe you are a *sinner* ?”

“ Why, *yes*.” (Impatiently.)

“ And need God’s forgiveness ?”

“ Yes.”

“ Are you seeking for it ?”

“ No.”

“ Ought you not to be seeking for it ?”

“ Yes ; I suppose so.”

“ Well, then, will you begin, without any more delay ? and act as you know you ought, in order to be saved ?”

“ You and I don’t agree,” says she.

“ No matter for that. But we agree in one thing : I think exactly as you do, that you ought to seek the Lord. But you don’t agree with *yourself*. Your course disagrees with your conscience. You are not against *me*, but against your own reason and good sense—against your known duty, while you lead a prayerless life. I am surprised that a girl of your good mind will do so. You

are just yielding to the desires of a wicked and deceitful heart. I do not ask you to think as I think, or feel as I feel; I only ask you to *act* according to the Bible and your own good sense.—Is there anything unreasonable, or unkind, any bigotry in asking this?”

“Oh, no, sir. But I am sorry I called you a bigot.”

“I am glad of it. I respect you for it. You spoke as you felt.—But let that pass. I just want you to attend to religion in your own way, and according to God’s word. I did not come here to abuse you, or domineer over you, but to reason with you. And now, suffer me to ask you, if you think it right and safe to neglect salvation, as you are doing? I know you will answer me frankly.”

“No; I do not think it is.”

“Have you long thought so?”

“Yes; to tell you the truth, I *have*, a good while.”

“Indeed! and how came you still to neglect?”

“I *don’t know!* But they keep talking to me,—a kind of *scolding* I call it; and they talk in such a way, that I am provoked, and my mind turns against religion. If they would talk to me as you do, and reason with me, and not be *ding-ing* at me, and treating me as if I were a *fool*, I should not feel so.”

Said I, “They may be unwise perhaps, but they

mean well; and you ought to remember, that religion is not to be blamed for *their* folly.—And now, my dear girl, let me ask you seriously;—will you attend to this matter of your salvation as well as you can, according to the word of God and with prayer, and endeavor to be saved? Will you do it, without any farther delay? If you are not disposed to do so; if you think it best, and right, and reasonable to neglect it; if you do not wish me to say anything more to you about it; then, say so, and I will urge you no more: I shall be sorry, but I will be still. I am not going to annoy you, or treat you impolitely.—What do you say? shall I leave you and say no more?”

“I don’t wish you to leave me.”

“Well, do *you* wish, to seek the Lord?”

“I wish to be *saved*,” said she. “But I never can believe in total depravity. The doctrine disgusts me. It sounds so much like *cant*. I *never will* believe it. I abhor it. And I *won’t* believe it.”

“Perhaps not,” said I. “I do not ask you to believe it. But I ask you to repent of sin *now*—to improve your day of grace, and get ready for death and heaven. I ask you to love the world supremely no longer—to deny yourself and follow Christ, as you know you ought to do. When you sincerely try to do these things; you will begin to find out something about your heart, that you do not know now.”



“But I don't like *doctrines!* I want a practical religion!”

“That practical religion is the very thing I am urging upon you; the practice of prayer—the practice of repentance—the practice of self-denial—the practice of loving and serving God in faith. I care no more about doctrines than you do, for their own sake. I only want *truth*, which shall guide you rightly and safely, and want you to follow it.”

“Well,” said she, “if I attempt to be religious, I shall be a Unitarian.”

“*Be* a Unitarian then, if the Bible and the Holy Spirit will make you one. Do not be afraid to be a Unitarian. But get at the truth, and follow it, according to your own sober judgment. Study your Bible, for your own heart. Get right. Pray God to direct you. And never rest, till you feel, that God is your friend and you are his. I beseech you to this; because I love you and wish you to be right and happy.—And now, my dear girl, tell me, will you try to do it?”

“Yes, sir, *I will.*”

“I thank you for that promise. And I do trust God will bless you.”

In a few days she sent for me. I found her very sad. She told me she was in trouble. She had not found it so easy a thing to be a Christian as she expected. Her heart rebelled and recoiled;

and she did not know what was the matter. Her mind would wander. The world would intrude. Instead of "getting nearer to religion, she was getting farther off, every day." She wanted to know, if other people felt so, when they tried to be Christians.

I said but little to her, except to direct her to God's promises, to those that seek him with all their heart. She desired me to pray with her, which I did.—As I rose to depart; she affectionately entreated me not to neglect her.

About ten days after this, she sent for me again. I obeyed her summons. She told me with tears in her eyes, that she never dreamed she was so wicked. She said the more she tried to love God and give up sin; the more her own heart opposed her. Her sins not only appeared greater; but it seemed to her, that sinning was as natural to her as breathing. "*What shall I do?*" said she; "I have no peace, day or night! My resolutions are weak as water."

I repeated texts of scripture to her. 'In me is thy help. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts,' (his thoughts are wrong,) 'and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. Strive to enter in at the strait gate.'

I saw her several times. She said her troubles

increased upon her, temptations came up every day; and it seemed to her, “there *never was so wicked a heart*, as she had to contend with.” Among other things, she said, some Christian people would keep talking to her, and she did not wish to hear them. I advised her to avoid them as much as possible. And without letting her know it, I privately requested her officious exhorters to say nothing to her. But I found it hard work to keep them still. And when she complained to me again of their officious inquiries about her feelings; I requested her to leave the room, whenever any one of them should venture on such an inquiry again.

She continued her prayerful attempts after the knowledge of salvation; and in a few weeks she found peace and joy in believing in Christ. She told me she *knew* her entire depravity; “but,” said she, “I never should have believed it, if I had not found it out by my own experience. It was just as you told me. When I really tried to be a Christian, such as is described in the Bible; I found my heart was all sin and enmity to God. And I am sure, I never should have turned to Christ, if God had not shown me mercy. It was all grace.

“Now I believe in total depravity. But I learnt it alone. You did not convince me of it.”

“I never tried,” said I.

“I know you didn’t; and it was well for me that you let it alone. If you had tried to prove it, or gone into a dispute about Unitarianism; I believe I should not have been led to my Saviour.”

She afterwards made a public profession of religion, which she still lives to honor.

## IGNORANCE OF SELF.



IN the time of a revival of religion, a clergyman, not much known to me, called upon me, and by invitation preached for me, at my regular weekly lecture in the evening. I had mentioned to him the existing seriousness among the people. His sermon did not suit me. He made careless statements; seemed to me to rely on impressions, more than on truth; seemed to value his own powers, and to desire other people to rely on theirs. I perceived that he highly esteemed himself, as “a revival preacher;” and I thought he preached “revival,” and prayed “revival,” rather than religion.

After we had got home, and my clerical friend had retired for the night; one of my most intimate and confidential friends came in to see me, and inquired how I liked the sermon. I criticised it, with some freedom. My friend then told me, that as she left the church, she fell in company with one of our young ladies, who had been serious for

some weeks, and who said to her; "Oh, that sermon will do me good. It was just what I wanted. I wish our minister would preach so."

I felt humbled and sad. And as my clerical friend was much older than myself, I thought it became me to consider more carefully what he had preached, and what I had been saying.

But I noticed, that, from that time, the serious impressions of this young lady, who thought "the sermon would do her good," began evidently to diminish. I saw her often, and aimed to bring back the depth and solemnity of her former seriousness. It was all in vain. She grew more and more indifferent, till finally, she went back to the world entirely. There she remains. Years have rolled on; but she remains a stranger to Christ.

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Convicted sinners are very poor judges of what "will do them good." The very things, which they think they need, are often the very things, which are snares to their souls. How is it possible for "the natural man, who discerneth not the things of the Spirit of God," to tell what will do him good? He has no sincere liking for God, or the truth of God. And if likings are to be consulted, the truth must often be sacrificed. It is

better to trouble his conscience, than to please his heart. A convicted sinner is the last person in the world to judge justly, in regard to the kind of instruction he needs. He will seize error more readily than truth; and if his tastes are consulted, his soul will be endangered. In consulting such tastes, lies the cunning art of deceivers, who lead crowds to admire *them*, and run after *them*, and talk of *them*, while they care not for the truth: "deceiving and being deceived."

## SUPERFICIAL CONVICTION.



THERE was much opposition to religion, at one time, among a few young men, in the place where I was settled. It was in a season of revival. Probably the gospel was then preached with more than ordinary plainness. The complaint was made, that there was too much said about the justice of God, the terrors of the Law, and the wickedness of the human heart. They said that I “exaggerated,” in respect to the danger of sinners, and made God appear as a terrible and odious Being; which was “no way to lead men to religion.”

Just at this time, I was informed, that some young men were determined to attend the meeting in the evening, with stones in their pockets to stone me on the spot, if I ventured to preach about “depravity,” and “sinners’ going to hell.” This was an indication, I thought, that the doctrines of divine justice and human wickedness had alarmed



them, and that these arrows ought to be 'made sharp in the heart of the king's enemies.'" Therefore, I preached, that evening, on these two points, the wickedness of men, and the anger of God against the wicked. There was no disturbance. Nobody stoned me. The opposers were present, and were seated near together. In the first part of the sermon, there was an occasional whisper among them, but they soon became attentive, and our meeting was one of stillness and deep solemnity.

Immediately after the service, I attended an inquiry meeting, to which I had publicly invited all unconverted sinners, who were disposed prayerfully to study divine truth. Some of the young men met me at this meeting. Within a few months some of them united with the church. Among them, there was one, who told me, at the time of his examination for church membership, that what had been reported of him was not true,—that he "had *not* carried stones in his pockets prepared to stone me." Said he, "I know my heart was wicked enough to do almost anything, but it never was bad enough to do that."

I noticed this expression. It was an unusual thing to hear such a remark. Directly the opposite was common. I therefore examined this young man the more carefully. But he appeared so sensible of his natural depravity, so humble, so

docile, and so determined to live a life of holiness, that he gained my confidence, and he was received into the church. I thought that he might be a true believer, and still his views of divine doctrine be erroneous; and I knew very well, that many people regarded me as too strict on points of doctrine. And though I believed, and had always acted on the principle, that true experimental religion will always lead its subjects to a knowledge of the great essential doctrines of the Christian system,—indeed, that to experience religion is just to experience these doctrines,—I came to the conclusion, that this principle would not adjudge him to be unfit to become a communicant.

As long as he remained in the place, (about two years,) he lived apparently a Christian life. But after he removed to a neighboring city, away from his religious associates, and under a new kind of influences; he soon began to neglect public worship, violate the Sabbath, and finally became a profane and intemperate man. I called to see him, and conversed with him. He was entirely friendly to myself; but he appeared blinded and hardened. He said he did not think himself to be very wicked: “Indeed,” says he, “I never *did* think my heart was so bad as some people tell of. I never did much hurt; and as to being so bad that I can’t reform I know that I can turn from sin when I please.”

Probably my exertions for him did no good. The last that I heard of him was, that he grew worse and worse, and would probably die a miserable and drunken man.

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I have often thought, that a truly regenerate man cannot have any doubt of the entire depravity of the heart. If he does not see *that*, it is probable that he does not see his heart. And hence, his repentance, his faith in Christ, and his reliance upon the Holy Spirit, will probably, all of them, be only deceptions. My observation continues to confirm me more and more in the opinion, that *to experience religion, is to experience the truth of the great doctrines of divine grace.*

## EXCITEMENT.



WHILE God was pouring out his Spirit upon the congregation to which I ministered, and upon many other places around us, two individuals belonging to my parish went to a neighboring town to attend a "camp-meeting." One of them was a young man of about twenty years of age, whose mother and sisters were members of the church. The other was a man of about twenty-six years, whose wife and wife's sister were also communicants with us. Both of these men returned from that meeting professed converts to Christ. They had gone to it, as they told me, without any serious impressions, impelled by mere curiosity. While there they became very much affected; so much so, that one or both of them fell to the ground, and remained prostrate for an hour, unable to stand. They earnestly besought the people to pray for them, and prayed for themselves. Their feelings became entirely changed; instead of grief

and fear, they were filled with joy and delight. And in this joyful frame of mind they returned home, not having been absent but two or three days.

I soon visited them both, and conversed with them freely. At my first interview, I had great confidence in their conversion. They seemed to me to be renewed men, so far as I could judge, from their exercises of mind. They appeared humble, solemn, grateful and happy. In future conversations with them, my mind was led to some distrust of the reality of their conversion. They did not seem to me to have an *experimental knowledge of the truth*, to such an extent, as I believed a regenerated sinner would have. I could get no satisfactory answers when I asked, "What made you fall? how did you feel? what were you thinking of? What made you afterwards so happy? What makes you so happy now? What makes you think, God has given you a new heart? What makes you think, you will not return to the world and love it as well as ever? They had ready answers to all such questions; but they did not seem to me to be *right* answers. They appeared to have no clear and full ideas of the exceeding sinfulness of the heart, of remaining sin, or the danger of self-delusion. And yet these men were prayerful, thoughtful, serious and happy. They studied their bibles, forsook their old companions, and appeared to value and relish all the appointed

means of grace. In this way of life they continued for months. I took pains to see and converse with them often; and though they did not appear to me to blend very happily in feeling with other young Christians, or to enjoy our religious services as if they were quite satisfied; yet my mind apologized for them, on the ground of the peculiar way in which their religion commenced. And with the exception of their imperfect views and feelings, about the great doctrines of religion; I saw nothing in either of them, to make me think them unfit for connection with the church.

Some months after their professed conversion, I mentioned to them, separately, the subject of making a public profession of their faith. Each appeared to think this his duty; but each of them was rather reserved. I could not very definitely ascertain their feelings; though I aimed carefully and kindly, and repeatedly to do so. One season of communion after another passed by; and neither of them united with the church. Their particular friends, who had made such frequent mention of their conversion, as if it were more worthy of mention, than the conversion of scores of sinners around them, and who had so much rejoiced in their conversion, and had been so confident of its reality; began to be very silent about them. I found that their confidence in them was shaken.

Within a year from the time when they pro-

fessed to have turned to Christ, the younger man had become entirely careless of religion; and, so far as I know, continues so to this day.

The other one was a little more steadfast. But within three years, he had become an intemperate man, and shame and a torment to his family; and the last I heard of him, he was a drunkard! He had ceased to attend divine worship on the Sabbath; family prayer was abandoned; his children were neglected; and his broken-hearted wife, with prayer for him still on her lips, but almost without hope that God would hear, was fast bending downwards towards the grave, the only remaining spot of an earthly rest!

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Mere excitements of mind on the subject of religion, however powerful, unless they arise from the known truth of God, are never safe. Excitement, however sudden or great, is not to be feared or deprecated, if it is originated simply by the truth, and will be guided by the truth. All other excitements are pernicious. It is easy to produce them, but their consequences are sad. A true history of spurious revivals would be one of the most melancholy books ever written.

The great leading doctrines of Christianity are the truths which the Holy Spirit employs, when

he regenerates souls. If young converts are really ignorant on such points, not having experimentally learnt them, they are only converts to error and deception. It is not to be expected, perhaps not to be desired, that young Christians should understand doctrines scholastically, or theologically, or metaphysically. But if they are Christians indeed, it is probable that their mind will be *substantially* right, on such doctrines as human sinfulness, divine sovereignty, atonement, justification by faith in Jesus Christ, regeneration by the special power of the Holy Spirit, and the constant need of divine aid. God's children all have the same image, and same superscription—the family mark. Heaven has but one mould. “Beholding as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image.”



## ASHAMED OF CHRIST.

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IN the course of my annual pastoral visitation to the families of my congregation, I called upon a married woman, (not a professor of religion,) whom I had seen before, and whom I had aimed to persuade to prepare for the future life. I recollected her former reserve and apparent indifference to religion, and determined, before I entered the house, to exert all my powers to lead her to an immediate attention to her future welfare. As I expected, I found her alone, her husband being engaged in his daily employ, as a mechanic. I stated to her, in few words, the particular reason why I had called on her, that I wished to persuade her to attend to her salvation.

“I have little time for that,” said she.

“Little time!” said I. “What do you mean?”

“I mean,” said she, with a very determined air, “that my time is all occupied. I have hardly a moment to spare. I have much to do for my

family. I have my husband and three children to care for. We are not rich. And if we are to live comfortably and appear respectably, I must be industrious—at work almost every moment of my time. My husband works hard, and I mean to do *my* part towards getting a living.”

“I am glad to hear you say that,” said I; “it gives me a higher opinion of you. It convinces me that you know *one* part of your duty, and intend to do it. I am sorry that you are overburdened with work, if you are so; I am sorry that you have any hardships. But I am *not* sorry that you are not rich, as you say. If you were rich, I should have less hope of you; you would have more temptations, and *no more* time. The gospel is for the poor; for their comfort here, and their salvation hereafter. Jesus Christ was poor. He preached to the poor. He associated with the poor. He sympathized with the poor. He loved the poor. If you had less to do, I am not certain that you would be any more inclined to give attention to religion than—”

“Yes, I should,” said she.

“I have no doubt you think so; but perhaps you are mistaken. How is it with other people? with those who *have* less to do? Do you see the rich and people of leisure, any more of *them* Christians, in proportion to the number, than of the poor?”

“No, sir; not so many.”

“Well, are you an exception? Are you not like other people? And if, on the whole, more people are hindered from religion than helped towards it by wealth and time *enough* to attend to it, is it not probable, that if you were in the very condition you wish to be in, with more wealth, and less to occupy you,—is it not probable, that you would be less likely than you are now, to attend to religion? Think a moment. Many of your friends and neighbors, who have much time, are not pious. Many of them, who have little time to spare from labor, are. Somehow or other they have found time to pray, to seek the Lord, to repent. And now, my dear woman, tell me honestly, have you not as much time as they?”

“I suppose I have,” said she.

“Then, can you not seek the Lord as well as they?”

After a considerable pause, she answered with apparent hesitation:—

“I could, if I knew how.”

“*Will* you, if I will tell you how?”

“Yes, as well as I can, in the little time I have to spare.”

“Time! woman! Time to spare! What is time given to you *for*, but to lay up treasures in heaven? You must find time to be sick, and time

to die, whether you are prepared or not. And you ought not to treat religion, as if it were a mere secondary matter, to be attended to or not, just according to your convenience."

"Oh! no, sir; I do not mean *that*. I have always designed to be a Christian."

"And you have put it off from time to time, waiting for a more fit opportunity?"

"Yes, I have."

"Then let me tell you, a more fit opportunity will never come, till the day you die! No, it never will! Your idea about want of time is all a deception. You have had time, and you have lost it! You have it to-day, and you are losing it now. You have done your duty to your family *well*, and I respect you for it. I honor your feelings of anxiety and affection for your husband and children. I would not, that you should do less for them. But I would, that you should do *more* for your own soul, and for your God and Saviour. I tell you solemnly, you *have* time to seek God. It is a deceitful and wicked heart, and not want of time, that keeps you in your irreligion. God knows your situation, and all your cares. He has himself placed you, as you are situated. He will accommodate the aids of his grace to all the difficulties of your situation. 'He knoweth our frame, and remembereth we are but dust.' He does not require of you *anything*, which, by his grace, you

cannot do. And you have a wrong idea of the merciful God, when you think he has placed you in such a situation, that you have not time to attain salvation."

"I do not mean to say *that*," said she.

"Then you *have* time; and have no occasion to talk about the little time you have?"

"Yes; I have time; if I knew how."

"God has told you how. You may find his directions in his word. For example, in the Fifty-fifth chapter of Isaiah; 'Seek ye the Lord while he may be found; call ye upon him while he is near.' That is one way of seeking him. You must pray. Do you ever pray?"

"Not often!"

"Ought you not to pray, as he bids you?"

"I *ought* to."

"Then *will* you? will you begin to-day? will you carefully read that chapter, and pray over it, and beseech God to lead you to salvation?"

"Yes, *I will*," said she, solemnly.

"Then, good-bye. If you seek the Lord, as that chapter directs; you will not seek in vain."

A few days after this, I called upon her and found her in a very anxious state of mind. She had no more to say about want of time. She seemed deeply impressed with a sense of sin and utter unworthiness, and expressed her gratitude to God, that her mind had been turned to this sub-

ject, before her life had come to a close. I conversed with her, as well as I could ; and aimed to lead her to Christ. She appeared to me to know her condition as a sinner so well, and to be so deeply impressed with a sense of her need of Christ, and in all respects so solemn and determined, that I hoped she would soon be brought into the peace and security of faith.

I soon called again, and found her in the same state of mind. This surprised me. I had not expected it. I labored to find what could be her hindrance ; but I questioned, and reasoned, and talked, in vain.

Again and again, I repeated my visits to her. She remained the same. It distressed me. I could not understand it. For months, she had appeared to me to understand all the great truths of the gospel, and to feel them deeply. I could detect no error in her views. I could not find wherein she was unprepared to deny herself. I could discover no reliance upon her own righteousness, and no lack of prayer or love of the world, which might tend to hinder her from coming to Christ. She omitted no outward duty. Daily she studied and prayed in secret. Still she had no hope and no peace. And yet, as months rolled on, her seriousness and solemnity did not appear to diminish, as I expected they would. The Holy Spirit had not forsaken her.

Her case seemed to me a dark mystery. I could not understand it. I had never been acquainted with any such instance before. Ordinarily I had found those of such deep seriousness coming to repentance, or else losing their anxiety, much sooner than this. She appeared to have all confidence in me, and to conceal none of her feelings from me. I knew she was a woman of good mind, and strong and deep feelings. And on that ground, after exhausting all my powers to discover her hindrance or difficulty, I said to her one day, at a kind of venture; "Mrs. K., I have been very anxious about you for a long time. I love and respect you. I have tried with all my might to do you good. But I have failed! Something, I know not what, keeps you back from repentance and coming to Christ.—Now, what is it?"

"Why;" said she, (with great effort, speaking as if compelling herself to speak;) "I have never been baptized."

The expression startled me. I could not conceive what she meant. I knew she was a woman of good mind, and well instructed; and how the lack of baptism should keep her from turning to Christ, it was impossible for me to conjecture. Her case was a perfect riddle to me, darker than before. I answered:—

"You have never been baptized? Well, what

of that? how does that hinder you from fleeing to Christ?"

"Oh," said she, "if I was really a Christian, it would be my duty to join the church: and I never could come out at my age, before my husband and my three children, and be baptized."

I was perfectly amazed at her!

"Why," said I, "do you mean that you should be ashamed to own Christ, and be baptized, in the presence of your husband and children?"

"Yes, I mean just that."

"And has that idea hindered you from coming to Christ?"

"Yes, I believe it has. I never could do that; and every time I think of following Christ, that turns me back. I could not endure it. If it was not for that, I believe I should be willing to follow Christ. There is no other thing that I know of, which I should not be willing to do."

Still more amazed, I answered:—

"You utterly astonish me! I am amazed beyond measure! Is it possible, that a woman of your sense, of your character and decision, is hindered by such an idea? Are you not ashamed of it?"

"I know it seems foolish," said she; "and that is the reason why I did not tell you before. I thought you would despise me; but such are my feelings. I never *could* be baptized!" She wept bitterly.



“Well, I thank you, my dear friend, for telling me now; I thank you much for it, and respect you for it. You shall never regret it. I have no disposition to despise you, or in any way hurt your feelings. But is it not strange that—”

“Yes; it is strange and foolish,” said she, interrupting me; “but I cannot help it. I do feel so. Oh! how I wish I had been baptized in my infancy. But my parents were not communicants in the church.”

She still sat weeping immoderately.

“My dear friend,” said I, “you are yielding to a temptation of the devil! Remember, Christ has said, ‘He that is ashamed of me, of him will I be ashamed.’”

“I know it, I know it all; I have thought of it a thousand times. I wish I did not feel so; but I cannot help it.”—As she said this, she lifted her streaming eyes upon me, and hastily brushed away her tears, as if determined to dismiss the subject of religion from her thoughts.

“Hear me!” said I. “You *must* not yield to this! Your being baptized cannot certainly be a matter of great self-denial to you; and if you were a believer indeed, you would not feel it to be so. Give yourself to Christ to be saved; and you will not hesitate then, with your heart full of love to him, to be baptized before your husband and children, and all the world, if need be.”—She

shook her head at this, in a very determined manner, as if she disbelieved it, or was resolved to dismiss religion from her thoughts.—Said I,—

“ Well then, since you feel so, I will remove all that difficulty,—*you need not be baptized at all*, if you do not wish to be. You need not think of it again. Repentance and fleeing to Christ in faith are your duties now ; and the great adversary is keeping you from Christ, by leading you to think of what may be your duty hereafter. Dismiss all that from your thoughts entirely. You need *not* be baptized. You need not join the church. I never will say a word to you about it, unless you do to me. Only repent. Give God your heart *now*, before he leaves you to your own way. The Holy Spirit will not always strive with you.”

“ Do you mean,” said she, “ that I need *never* be baptized ?”

“ Yes ; I mean exactly that. You need not be baptized, unless you choose to be, after you have come to repentance and faith in the Redeemer. I never will mention the subject to you.—And now will you seek the Lord with all your heart, and let baptism alone ?”—Said she,—

“ I hope I shall be enabled to do so, if I can be a Christian without being baptized.”

I prayed with her, and left her.—Within a very few days from that time, she found peace with

God. She had very comfortable evidences of his acceptance. She appeared to be a peculiarly determined and happy believer. She avowed her hope of eternal life through the atonement made for sinners by Jesus Christ—expressed her astonishment, that she had lived so long in impiety—thanked me very emphatically for “delivering her out of her snare,” as she called it,—and blessed God, that her “poor heart could now rest.”

After this I saw her often. For months she continued much the same in hope, peace, and gratitude towards God.

I kept my promise to her. I never uttered a word to her about connection with the church. One day she said to me, that she should like to become a member of the church, if I thought she “had any fitness for the Lord’s table.”

“But, Mrs. K.”—said I, “you have never been baptized.”

“Oh,” says she, “don’t say anything about that. I have got over all that difficulty now. I am willing to be baptized; and *I want* my husband and my children to *know*, that I love Christ and am willing to own his name.”

A few days afterwards, she was received, as a member of the church; and I baptized her in the presence of all the congregation.

After she had been at the Lord’s table, and the congregation was dismissed; she waited for me at

the door of the church, to tell me, that she “wanted to have her children baptized in the afternoon.” She apologized for asking me to do it on a day, in which I had so many duties; but she said, she could not wait; she did not wish to have her children tormented, as she had been; and she might not live till another Sabbath. She presented them for baptism in the afternoon. The next day she told me, that she considered the covenant of God a very precious privilege, she could now pray for her children, as embraced in the covenant promises; and it relieved her heart to think, that they would not be hindered from religion by such an “obstacle as had troubled her, so foolishly.”

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Many convicted sinners are kept from salvation by some mere trifle. It is important to remove the obstacle. They will not be likely to seek God in earnest, till that is done. The stony ground and the thorny ground need preparing before the seed is sown. The young man in the gospel valued his riches too much to follow Christ. All kinds of rubbish will gather around a wicked heart; and a sinner will yield to an obstacle which he is ashamed to mention. We have gained something, when we have discovered what it is. We can then take aim, and the arrow is more apt to hit.

## THE LAST STEP.



FOR the purpose of learning as much as possible, about the workings of the human heart, I have been accustomed, in conversing with those who have been led to indulge a hope in Christ, to ask them questions, whose answers might be beneficial to me, in my intercourse with others. "As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man." It is not probable, that the consciousness of such persons will always be very extensive. Some are not likely to recollect the processes of their own mind. But it is probable, that such consciousness will have much truth in it; and that thereby we may sometimes get a clear understanding of the operations of the Holy Spirit, and of the difficulties or errors, which keep sinners from repentance. On this matter, the conceptions of an uneducated or an ignorant man are not worthy of so much regard probably, as those of a well-trained and discriminating mind. Fanaticism will

soon expose itself, when its own consciousness is appealed to, and is compared with the truth of God.

To those who have recently indulged a religious hope, I have many times put such a question as this ;—what kept you so long from Christ ?—or, what was your hindrance ?—or, what were you trying to do, in all that time, while you were so anxious about religion, and had not attained the hope you have now ? I have never received but two answers to that question. The answers, indeed, in the form or words of them have been various ; but they might all be reduced to two in substance, if not to one.

A highly educated man, a fine scholar and a very careful thinker, gave me one of them ;—a man, at that time an officer in one of our colleges, and who afterwards filled an important station in a public institution, as a man of science. He had been for some weeks very anxious and prayerful. He had often sought conversation with me, and I had told him all the truth of God, and his own duty, as well as I could. Very manifestly he had disliked, if he had not disbelieved what I said to him, in respect to prayer and a sinner's dependence upon the Holy Spirit. On one occasion, after I had been urging upon his heart and conscience some of the fundamental and plain truths of the gospel, he said to me ; “ this is too doctrinal.” I

therefore concluded, that just such doctrinal instruction and urgency were the very things his case required, and continued ever afterwards to employ them, when I conversed with him. At another time, he stated to me the speculative preferences and habits of his own mind; and expressed his opinion, that such a mind needed "views of truth adapted to its calibre," as he expressed it. I therefore took pains, ever afterwards, to simplify everything as much as possible, and talk to him, as I would talk to any unlettered man or to a child. When I referred to the scriptures and quoted their language in its connection, and showed how one passage was explained by another, and how the truths I urged upon him were perfectly consistent with all the other scriptures, and how these truths of God must not be set aside in our experience, but that our religious experience must mainly consist in experiencing just these doctrines or truths of God; he became silent, but I did not think he was satisfied. He appeared convinced, but not in the least relieved.

After he had reached a different state of mind, he came to me again; and stated to me his views and feelings, with a clearness, that I have seldom known equalled. His mind seemed as light as day. "Faith is the great thing," said he. "Simplicity is better than speculation." After conversing with him for a time, I thought I should like to

know, how such a clear and strong mind would judge in respect to the hindrances, which keep convicted sinners from salvation. I therefore said to him:—

“You have been a long time attentive to religion; what hindered you, that you did not come to repentance before?”—Says he,

“Allow me to tell you about myself. I have studied religion for years. It is no new subject to me. Three or four times before now, I have had my attention arrested and have been over all this process of conviction, and prayer, and anxiety, everything, but the last step.”

“What was *that step*?” said I.

“Giving up all to God!” was his emphatic reply. He then went on to say: “I was like a man trying to climb over a rail fence. I went up one rail, and then another, and another, till I got to the top; and then got down again and went on, the same side as before. That has always been the way with me, before now. But now, I hope I have got over. I have been brought to give up all to God.”

“What do you mean by giving up all to God?”

“I mean,” said he, “consenting to let him rule; to let him do with me as he pleases, and trust him to do everything for me through Jesus Christ.”

“How came you to get over the fence now?”



“Because *I* gave up all, and *God* took me over.”

This was his consciousness. So far as he could himself understand the process of conversion, the turning point lay just here,—“I gave up all to God.”

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*All* true converts may not be conscious of any special act of the Holy Spirit in their regeneration. Minds are not all equally discriminating. Some are confused in respect to what passes within them. But with discriminating minds there will ordinarily be the clear impression, that something has been done for the soul beyond its own power. This impression, indeed, is no unfit test in every case of religious hope. If it is entirely wanting, we may well doubt the reality of the believed conversion. No matter how it is expressed. The words are nothing. But the thing is essential. The Holy Spirit is the Author of regeneration, and why should not the subject of his operations be expected to have a consciousness, that a power beyond his own has acted for him? and has done for him, what was never done before? That “effectual calling is the work of God’s Spirit,” has ordinarily constituted one of the

things which true converts have learned by their own experience. In some way or another, this idea will come out, as they are giving a reason for the hope that is in them. "He sent from above; he took me; he drew me out of the deep waters, and established my goings upon the rock." Moral suasion experience is a very suspicious sort of experience. There is a better kind:—"I gave up all to God, and *he* took me over."

And more. Impenitent sinners need to be convinced of their dependence on a power beyond their own. They need this especially. It is an essential point. Such a conviction will tend to drive them off from their miserable self-reliances. It will never put them at rest, but lead them to work, to prayer. Aside from such a conviction, they will be ignorant of the extent of their depravity; their seriousness will lack depth; and their seeking lack earnestness. The just sense of the amount of their criminality for continuing in their impenitence cannot be brought home to their hearts, unless the doctrine of their dependence helps to bring it there.

The Holy Spirit is their offered aid; and surely that aid is enough. They should know, and feel it to their heart's core, that they are now, on the spot, to-day, under the most solemn obligations to repent, not only because sin is wrong, but because God offers them the aids of the Holy

Spirit: "in me is thy help." Their impenitence not only tramples under foot the blood of the covenant, but also does despite to the Spirit of Grace.

## THE PERSECUTED WIFE.



Just before one of our seasons of communion, I called upon a woman whom I had often seen, and who for some months had entertained a hope in Christ, to have some conversation with her in reference to her uniting with the church. She thought such a step to be her duty; for she believed the Holy Spirit had renewed her heart, and Christ had accepted her. She delighted in faith to repose upon him; and she said it would rejoice her heart to come to his table, and try to honor a Saviour, whom she had neglected for so many years.

But she feared her husband would oppose it. He was somewhat intemperate, and when intoxicated, tyrannical. She wished to unite with the church, but she did not wish him to know it. He seldom attended public worship, and cared and said so little about religion, that she deemed it quite probable he would never know anything about it, if she should make a public profession of

her faith. She proposed, therefore, to unite with the church, but to keep it a secret from him.

To this proposal, I could not consent. I explained to her why I could not. There were several reasons. He was her husband, whom she was bound to honor. And though there might be much in him which she could not respect, his irregular life and his opposition to religion, still she was bound to treat him kindly. If she should unite with the church without his knowledge; he would be more likely, as soon as he knew it, to be offended and treat her unkindly, and to have his opposition to religion increased. She must not be ashamed of Christ, or fear to do her duty in the face of all opposition. And if she had so little faith, that she could not confess Christ for fear of any wicked man's displeasure; if her faith in God was so small that she could not do her duty and trust him to take care of her; I could not have confidence enough in her piety, to consent to her reception into the church.

She appeared greatly cast down. She wept bitterly. "Then," said she; "I can never come to the Saviour's table!"

I replied, "I think you can, Madam. In my opinion, your husband will not be so much opposed to you, as you think. If he should be, you can pray for him; and He who hears prayer can remove his opposition."

She was much agitated. "What shall I do?" said she. "I do think it my *duty*, to come out from the world and own Christ, as my Saviour and Lord; and I long to do so. But I am afraid of my husband. I know he would never consent to it; and would abuse me, if I should name such a thing in his hearing!"

"You have not tried it, Madam. You have nothing to fear. God loves his children; and for their sakes often restrains wicked men. Besides, your husband is not so bad a man as you think, probably."

"Oh! sir, you don't know him. He sometimes talks to me in a dreadful manner, if he finds me reading the Bible, or crying."

"Well," said I, "it is nothing *but* talk. He has just manliness and courage enough, to bluster and abuse a poor woman like you, with his tongue; but he will go no further. If you do your duty, he will not dare to injure you. And quite likely, when he sees you are firm, your example will be the means of leading him to repentance."

"What *shall* I do? I wish you would tell me."

"I will tell you, Madam. When your husband comes home, take some favorable opportunity, when you are alone with him, and when he appears calm, sober, and good-natured; and just tell him seriously and kindly, how you feel, what you think of your past life, what you believe God has

done for you, and that you have come to the conclusion, it is your duty to unite with the church. If he is angry, or speaks unkindly to you; have no disputes, not a word of argument, hear all he has to say, in silence. You may tell him, if you think best, that you have done all your duty to him, as well as you could, while you had no religion; and now you mean to do it better. But you think you owe duties to your God also, which ought not to be neglected. But do not say one word, unless your feelings are kind, and mild, and calm. You must feel rightly, or you will not speak rightly.— You can at least tell him this; and see what he will say.”

“ Well, I will do it,” said she, “ if you think it best.”

I left her. Three days afterwards I called upon her, and found her in deep depression. She had followed my advice, employing my own words as nearly as possible, in speaking to her husband. At first, he was silent, and she thought he was going to make no opposition. But after saying a few words, he seemed to be worked up into a dreadful passion. He swore he would never live with her another day, if she joined the church. He would turn her out of doors. He declared, “ the church folks were all hypocrites ;” and as for her minister, he was a *villain* ; and if he ever came to his house again to destroy the peace of his

family, he would "put him out of the house quick."

"What time will he be home?" said I.

"In about an hour."

"Very well," said I, rising to go; "I will be here in an hour."

"Oh! no, sir, no!" said she, "I hope not! He will abuse you! I don't know what he would not do!"

"Never fear," said I. "He will not trouble me. You need not tell him I have been here, this morning. And if I meet him here at noon, do not leave me alone with him; stay and hear what he will say to me."

She begged me not to return; but in an hour afterwards I returned, and found him at home with his wife. I spoke to him, gave him my hand, and conversed with him for some minutes. He was rather taciturn, appeared a little sullen, but he did not treat me with any special rudeness. I mentioned to him the altered feelings of his wife; and expressed my hope, that he would himself give immediate and prayerful attention to his salvation. I solemnly assured him, that without being born again he could not see the kingdom of God; and that though he had neglected it so long, salvation was still within his reach. But that he would soon be on the down-hill of life, even if God should spare him, of which he had not an item of security.



To die as he was, would be dreadful. And if he would seek God, like his wife, they would live together more happily for themselves, and would set an example for their numerous children, which certainly would be beneficial to them, and be fondly remembered by them, when he and his wife were gone to the grave.

He heard all this in silence; but did not seem to be much affected by it, beyond an occasional sigh, while I was speaking. When I arose to depart, he coldly took leave of me.

Before the next season of communion arrived, I called upon his wife, expecting to find her prepared to confess Christ before men. She had seen that her husband did not treat *me* as he had sworn to do; and I thought she would be convinced by that, that there was nothing to be feared, if she should unite with the church, as she steadily maintained it was her duty to do. But I was disappointed. She seemed more determined than ever, to yield to her husband's wishes. "He has dreadfully threatened me," says she.

"And will you obey his threats, and disobey what you yourself say is the command of Christ?"

"I do know it is my duty. I feel it. The Testament makes it plain in Jesus Christ's own words. But we are poor people. I am a poor woman, without friends, dependent upon the daily labor of my husband, for myself and my children

He says he will not live with me a single day, after I join the church; and I don't know what will become of me and the children. The most of them are very young. I have eight of them, and the oldest is not sixteen. And what would become of this baby, if I had no house or home?"

As she said this, she was holding the little thing in her arms, and the tears gushed from her eyes, and fell in quick drops upon its little cheek.—The scene was too much for me. I turned away, and wept.

But repressing my emotions, I said to her:—  
“My dear friend, I am sorry for you. But I do not fear for you. Do whatever you seriously deem your duty, and God will take care of you. Your husband will do no such thing as he threatens. He will *not* leave you. He will *not* turn you out of the house. He will *not* drive you and the children into the street. If he should, remember ‘Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven. Ye cannot serve two masters. Whosoever will save his life shall lose it; and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and my words, of him shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory and in his

Father's, and of the holy angels. If any man come to me and hate not his father and mother, and wife and children, and brethren and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. Every man that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake shall receive an hundred fold, and shall inherit everlasting life.' Such are some of the solemn words of Christ. I cannot alter them. It is your solemn duty to weigh them well. They appear to have been uttered for just such cases as yours. In the first ages of Christianity they were obeyed. Men and women became even martyrs for Christ. I do not know what God may call *you* to endure—not martyrdom, I believe; but if he should, it were better for you to die a thousand deaths, than to dishonor and disobey your Lord. My heart bleeds for you, but I cannot help you. Go to your God. Cast your burden upon him. Pour out your heart to him. I have told you before, that I do not believe your husband will execute one of his threats. But if you cannot have faith in God, and obey his commands, come what may, do not think yourself a Christian. 'My sheep hear my voice. They follow me.' If you do not believe it to be your *duty* to come to the Lord's table—"

"Oh," said she, (interrupting me, and sobbing

as if her heart would break,) "I *know* it is a duty. It is my duty. Christ has commanded me."

"Well, will you obey him?"

She did not answer. She could not. She seemed crushed beneath a burden she was unable to bear, and continued to weep bitterly.

"I will leave you," said I. "I will not even pray with you now. You are the one to pray. You can pray better than I can, on this occasion; and God will hear you."

I left her. That communion season passed by, and another, and still another. She was still undecided. I mentioned the subject to her more than once; and on one occasion she told me she did not any longer fear *anything* on her own account, for she could herself bear death even; but it was her fear about her children, that kept her from her duty.

"God can take better care of them than you can," said I.

It appeared to me to be no part of my duty to urge her to unite with the church. I never had done so. I believed God would teach her her duty, as she prayed for the Holy Spirit. But I often exhorted her to learn her duty from her Bible, and by prayer; and when she had learnt it, to do it in good faith, and fear nothing. And she always affirmed, she knew her "duty to be, to confess Christ before the world."

Nearly a year after I had contrived to meet her husband at his house, when he had threatened to put me out of the house, if I came there; she sent for me. I went. Immediately after I entered her house she said to me :—

“ I have made up my mind to join the church, if you are willing to receive me. I know I ought to have done it before, but my faith was weak. I could not endure the thought of what is to come upon me and my children. After I got over all fear on my own account, I still feared for them. And even now I am afraid my faith will fail me, when the communion day comes. But if you are willing to receive me, and God will give me strength, I will go forwards where my Saviour commands.”—I said to her :—

“ Fear not, for I have redeemed thee; I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee; when thou passest through the fire, thou shalt not be burnt; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour.”

“ Precious promise !” said she; “ blessed promise! God has said it, and I can trust him.”

She appeared very solemn indeed, but not unhappy. She said she expected all that her husband had threatened; but she had for months been thinking

of the words of Christ, which I had quoted to her; and she could not hesitate any longer. "He gave his life for me," said she; "and shall I not give my worthless life for him, if he asks it?"

I told her I had no more to say to her, than I had said so often before. But she must tell her husband, that I had been there, and that she was going to obey the dying command of Christ. "You may tell him, that you have done your duty to him and to the children, as well as you could, and intend to continue to do it, as a good wife and mother ought." But she need not reason with him at all, if he made any opposition. She must not dispute or argue. And I would call to see her the Saturday before the communion Sabbath.

I did so. She informed me that she had done as I advised her. She told her husband what she meant to do; and he replied very sullenly:—"Well, you know what I told you. Not a day shall you stay in this house after you join that church! I *will not* live with you—not a day!"

I told her to repeat the same thing to him again that night. I afterwards learnt that she did; and he merely replied:—"You know what I told you—and I'll *do it!*"

Their house was situated too far from the church for her to walk; and some one must take care of the children, while she was absent at church. It was now Saturday. I engaged a con-

veyance for her to church, and procured a woman to take care of her children on the Sabbath.

She retired to bed on Saturday night, with a heavy heart. The thought would come over her mind, time after time, that she had spent her last day of peace—that before another night should come, her family would be broken up, and she and her children separated, perhaps forever, without a home, and without a friend to lean upon. She could do nothing but weep and pray; and she wept and prayed till she fell asleep.

When she awoke in the morning, her husband was gone. This alarmed her. She knew not what to expect. He had not commonly risen on Sabbath morning, till a late hour; and she supposed his doing so now foreboded no good. She hastily rose, dressed herself, looked for him;—he was nowhere to be found. The children hunted for him, but all in vain. With a sad heart she busied herself in preparing breakfast, and in about an hour he came in. “Wife,” says he, (with a sort of careless accent;) “I suppose you want to go to church to-day; and it is too far for you to go afoot. You know I am too poor to keep any horse; and I have been down to Mr. B——’s to get a ride for you in his wagon. He says you can ride with him, as well as not, if you want to go. And I will stay at home and take care of the children.”

She was so astonished, that she could scarcely believe her ears. She hesitated for a moment; but as the truth burst upon her, she threw her arms around his neck, and wept like a child. He wept too. But he aimed to conceal it; and making some expression about breakfast, as if to divert his own thoughts, he said he “would go back and tell Mr. B. that she would ride with him.”

She did ride with him. Her husband stayed at home and took care of the children. When she returned in the afternoon, he met her pleasantly; and when in the evening she told him, (as I had directed her to do,) that she had been at the Lord’s table; he merely replied in an affectedly careless manner,—“Well, what of that?”

Ever after that time, he made no opposition to her religion; but would take pains to accommodate her, all in his power. He would procure some means for her to attend church; would offer to stay with the children while she was gone; and, in every possible way, aimed to gratify her desires about her religious duties. He came with her to the church, when she presented her children for baptism. For a time he was more temperate; and we had no small hopes, that he would himself turn to the Lord. Indeed, I had confidently expected it, all along. But I never knew of any decided change in his habits. Whenever I spoke to him about his wife; he seemed to be glad on her ac-



count. He said he believed, "*she* was a true Christian, and no pretender; and wished all the members of the church were as good as she." But I could not induce him to seek the Lord.

What it was, that produced the sudden change in his feelings on that Saturday night, I never could ascertain. But it requires no great amount of faith to believe, that God interposed in behalf of that praying and weeping wife; and by the power of his own Spirit put a stop to the opposition and rage of that rebellious man. "He maketh the wrath of man to praise him, and the remainder of that wrath he will restrain."

## THE ARROW DRIVEN DEEPER.



FINDING it impossible on account of the number, to have much conversation with each individual at the inquiry meeting; I at one time abandoned the practice of conversation for a few weeks, and addressed them all together. I found this was unacceptable, and concluded therefore to return to the former custom.—It was on one of those evenings, when about seventy persons were present, and I was passing rapidly from one to another, that I came to an individual who had never been there before. Said I: “What is the state of *your* feelings on the subject of your salvation?” “I feel,” said he, “that I have a very wicked heart.” “It is a great deal more wicked, than you think it,” said I; and immediately left him, and addressed myself to the next person.

I thought no more of it, till a few days afterwards, when he came to me with a new song in his mouth. He had found peace with God, as he

thought, through faith in Jesus Christ. Said he : “I want to tell you how much good you did me. When I told you, that I had a very wicked heart, and you answered, that it was a great deal *more* wicked than I thought, and then said nothing more to me ; I thought it a most cruel thing. I expected something different. I thought you would say more ; and my soul was wonderfully cast down. I did not believe you. I was angry at your treatment. I thought you did not care, whether I was ever saved or not ; and I did not believe you knew anything about my feelings. But the words rung in my ears,—‘ a great deal more wicked than you think.’ I could not get rid of them. They were in my mind the last thing when I went to sleep, and the first when I woke. And then I would be vexed at you, for not saying something else. But that was the thing, which drove me to Christ. I now know, it was just what I needed. I thought, when I went to that meeting, my convictions were very deep. But I have found out they were very slight. You hit my case exactly. If you had talked to me, my burden would have been diminished. But you fastened one idea on my mind. You drove the arrow deeper, when I expected you to do just the contrary ; and I could find no relief, till I gave up all into the hands of Christ. I know you read my heart exactly.”

After some few minutes' conversation with him, he said to me:—"I want to ask you a question. I have been thinking of it a great deal, and I cannot conceive how you know what to say to each one, where there are so many. We have been talking about it some of us, and we cannot understand how it is, that you can know our thoughts and feelings, when nobody has told you. How *can* you tell what to say to one after another, when there are so many, and you have never seen some of them before, and they say so little to you?—"

"I have only one rule on that subject," said I. "I aim to conspire with the Holy Spirit. If I perceive any one truth has impressed the mind, I aim to make its impression deeper; because the Holy Spirit has already made that impression, and I would not diminish it by leading the mind off to something else. If I perceive any error in the individual's mind, I aim to remove it; for I know that the error is of sin, and not of the Holy Spirit."

"But," said he, "our impressions are so different."

"No matter. They are of the Holy Spirit if *truth* has made them; and he can choose the kind of truth which is appropriate to any sinner, better than I can. I just aim to conspire with the Holy Spirit."

Said he, "I am confident if you had said much to me, or anything, to turn my mind away from that one thing, it would have done me hurt. You have no idea how much you increased my trouble that night. I somehow wanted you to lighten my burden,—you made it heavier. Then I was soon led to see, that none but God could help me. I had partly begun to think my heart was improving. I found out the contrary, and turned to God in despair. He gave me peace, through Jesus Christ."

## DIVIDED MIND.



IN a season when the Holy Spirit was poured out, and there was an increasing interest in religion, and an increasing number of sinners awakened to a sense of their lost condition, two young persons, who had become serious and prayerful, were induced to forsake, in part, the services of our congregation, in order to attend those of another church, where there was also an uncommon degree of seriousness, but too much noise and talk on the subject,—too much said about “*revival*,” “*revival*.” I feared the result. A divided mind has poor prospects before it. I aimed as prudently as I could, to put a stop to the course of these young persons, but in vain. They were under the influence of a very zealous member of the church, who, perhaps, had more zeal than knowledge.

The result was what I feared it would be. They were both left without grace. They attain-

ed salvation nowhere. Almost the entire number of their associates among us, with whom they had been connected in the commencement of their seriousness, became hopefully the children of God, and united with the church. But these two remained the same as before. It appeared manifest to me, all along, that their seriousness really diminished, very much as their attention was divided. And this is what I have often noticed.— If our church-members were wise, they would never lend themselves to do this kind of mischief. They would not be beguiled into it through the desire to be esteemed liberal, and above bigoted notions, or through the pride of being more engaged in religion than their brethren, and wanting to go “where there is some life,”—“some real religion,”—“where the Holy Spirit is present.”

In my opinion, these young persons were led away from their *duty*, and thus grieved the Spirit of God. Many years have passed away since that time ; and neither of them has become a follower of Christ.

## HUMAN RESOLVES.



Two young girls of my congregation, about seventeen years of age, went to a neighboring town, where there was a religious excitement; and after remaining there about two days, returned home very happy. They thought they had attained salvation by faith in Christ.

On talking with them, I was surprised to find them so little sensible of the extent of human depravity, of the helplessness of human nature, and the necessity of regeneration by the Holy Spirit. They told me, that they had been rendered sensible of their sin and danger, had resolved to go to Christ; and the minister told them that was enough—if they really *resolved* to give up the world and to serve God, that was enough; and they *had* resolved to do so. This appeared to me, to be all the reason for the hope which made them so happy.

· But their religion did not last them six months.



At least, they gave no evidence of it, but much to the contrary. They ceased to hope and ceased to pray.

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Moral suasion is one thing, and the Holy Spirit is another. It is an easy thing for a minister to *fix a hope* in the heart of an alarmed sinner, but it is not safe. The Bible does not tell us, that a sinner's *resolves* are enough. It does not tell us, the resolves are regeneration.

## I CAN'T REPENT.



ONE of the most solemn assemblies that I have ever seen, was convened on the evening of the Sabbath, in a private house. It was an inquiry meeting; at which more than a hundred persons were present, the most of them young or in middle life. The structure of the house was rather peculiar. There was a spacious hall, about ten feet wide and about forty feet long, extending from the front door along the side of three parlors which opened into it, as well as into each other; and at the rear part of this hall was a stair-case extending to the second story of the house. Moveable benches were introduced into this hall, and placed along each side of it, to afford seats for those who attended this meeting, and who could not all be accommodated in the parlors. After the meetings had been continued in this place for a few weeks; it became manifest, that the hall was the preferred place. As the different persons came in and took

their seats where they pleased, the seats in the hall would be filled, and then the stairs would be used as seats entirely to the top, and then the upper hall would be occupied, and finally the parlors. I was accustomed to stand, while addressing the assembly, in one of the doors opening from the hall into the parlor, where my eye had a full view of all those in the hall, on the stairs and in one of the parlors. Besides a general exhortation, it was my ordinary custom to speak to each individual, passing from one to another. And all those in the hall and on the stairs could hear every word, which I uttered in this conversation, and the most of what any one said to me. And for these reasons, as I supposed, the persons who resorted there would choose the hall or the stairs. This listening of others, to what passed in conversation betwixt any one individual and myself, was never very pleasant to me. I should greatly have preferred to converse with each one alone; as there would have been less restraint on their part, and on my own, more certainty, that what I was saying would be truly applicable and would not be applied by any one, for whom it was not intended. And besides this, individuals would sometimes make expressions to me so erroneous, that I was unwilling others should hear them, lest they might be injured by it. To avoid this, I used to speak in a low tone of voice; and if the expressions of any individual

were becoming such, as I feared might be injurious; I usually broke off the conversation suddenly, by saying, I will call and see you to-morrow.

On the evening, to which I now allude; all the seats were filled, and three persons were seated on each stair entirely to the top, and many had found their place in the hall above. It was a calm and mild summer evening; and perfect stillness reigned over the crowd assembled there, unbroken except by the long breathing or the deep sigh of some pensive soul. I thought I had never seen so still, so solemn, and thoughtful an assembly. I closed the front door, after all had entered, and took my stand in my accustomed place. I hesitated to speak. I was afraid to utter a word. It seemed to me, that anything I could say would be less solemn, impressive, instructive, than that tomb-like silence in an assembly of so many immortal souls, each visited by the Holy Spirit. I stood, for some time, in perfect silence. The power of that silence was painful. The people sat before me, like statues of marble,—not a movement,—not a sound. It appeared as if they had all ceased to breathe. I broke the silence by saying slowly and in a low voice:—“Each one of you is thinking of his own immortal soul and of his God.” Again I paused for the space of an entire minute; for I was overawed, and knew not what

to say. Then falling on my knees, I commenced prayer. They all spontaneously knelt. After a short prayer, I proposed to speak a few words to each one of them, as far as it was possible; and requested all of them, except the individual with whom I should be conversing, to be engaged in reflection or in silent prayer to God. Passing rapidly from one to another, I had spoken to all those in the parlors and in the hall, till I had reached about the middle of it, where every word spoken could be heard, by the whole assembly. Coming to a man, about thirty years of age, whom I had seen there three times before, I said to him:—

“I did not expect to see *you* here to-night. I thought you would have come to repentance, before this time; and would have no occasion any longer to ask, what shall I do to be saved?”

“*I can't repent,*” said he, (with a sort of determined and despairing accent, and so loudly as to startle us all.) Instantly, I felt sorry for this expression. But I thought it would not do to avoid noticing it, and leave it sounding in the ears of so many impenitent sinners. I immediately answered, as I stood before him, as gently and yet solemnly as I could:—

“What an awfully *wicked heart* you must have! You can't repent! You love sin so well; that you cannot be sorry for it—you cannot for-

sake it—you cannot hate it!—You must be in an awful condition indeed! You are so much the enemy of God; that you cannot be sorry for having offended him—you cannot cease to contend against him—and even now, while you are sensible of the impropriety and unhappiness of it, you cannot cease to resist the Holy Spirit, who strives with you to bring you to repentance!—You must have an awfully depraved heart!”

“*I can't repent*,” said he again, (with an accent of grief and intolerable vexation)—“*I can't repent, with such a heart!*”

“That means,” said I, “that you have become too wicked to desire to become any better; for nothing but wickedness makes repentance difficult. And then, you just plead one sin, as an excuse for another—the sin of your heart, as an excuse for the *continued* sin of your heart!”

Still he insisted. “*I can't repent!* I should if I could!”—(and the tears rolled down his cheeks, of which he seemed to be utterly unconscious, as well as unconscious of the presence of any one but myself.)

“You would if you could,” said I, “is only a self-righteous and self-justifying excuse. Your deceitful heart means by it, that you are not so wicked as to continue in your impenitence *willingly*. It means that you are *willing* to repent, but you cannot. You are deceived. You are *not*

willing. You think you are, but you are in an error. You never *will* be willing, unless God shall verify in you the promise, 'My people shall be willing in the day of my power.' In that power lies your only hope, as I have told you before, when I urged you to pray. If you are willing to repent, what hinders you? I am willing you should repent. All of us here are willing. Every angel in heaven is willing you should repent. Christ who died to redeem you is willing. God the Father is willing. The Holy Spirit is willing, who, at this moment strives with you to bring you to repentance. What hinders you, then? Yourself only! And when you say you can't repent, you mean that you are not to be blamed for coming here tonight with an impenitent heart. You are wofully deceived! God blames you! The whole Bible blames you! Your own conscience, though you strive to silence it, blames you!—This excuse will not stand!"

"*I can't repent!*" said he again, (in a harsh, vociferating voice, as if in anger.)

"Then God can't save you," said I; "for he cannot lie, and he has said the impenitent shall be destroyed! *You* say you cannot repent. *He* has not said so. He commands you to repent."

He replied, with much agitation, but in a subdued tone:—"I am sure I have tried long; and

my mind has been greatly tormented. All has done no good. I do not see as I *can* repent!"

"Other people have repented," said I. "There are a great many penitents in the world. I find there are some here to-night, who think they have come to repentance, since they were here last Sabbath evening. One of them told me *then*, very much the same thing you tell me *now*, that it did not seem to him he ever could turn from sin; but he has found out he can. As to your having tried so long, the length of time will not save you. If a man has got his face turned the wrong way, the longer he goes on, the worse off he becomes. He would do well to stop, and turn about. Such is the call of the Bible: 'Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die? Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions, so iniquity shall not be your ruin. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord.' Other people have turned to God, and you ought to. But your mind has seized on the idea of your trying and your trouble, and you make an excuse and a self-righteousness of them."

"Do you think I am self-righteous?" said he.

"I *know* you are. That is your grand difficulty. You have been trying to save yourself. You are trying now. When you tried to repent, your heart aimed after repentance, as something



to recommend you to God, and constitute a reason why he should forgive and save you. It was just an operation of a self-righteous spirit. It was just an attempt to save yourself, to have your religion save you, instead of relying by faith upon Jesus Christ, to be saved from wrath through him. This is precisely the case with every impenitent sinner. The error is one. The forms of it may be various; but in all cases it is substantially the same thing. St. Paul has given a perfect description of it: 'going about,' (from one thing to another, from one device or attempt to another,) 'going about to establish a righteousness of their own, they have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God; for Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.' One man tries to establish a righteousness of his own, out of his reformations; another one, out of his duties; another, out of his painful attempts or painful convictions; as you just now mentioned your own torments of mind. It is evident, that you are trying to be righteous before God, through your pain and your attempted penitence. And if you should find any peace of mind in that way; it would only be a deception, not an item of religion in it. You ought to betake yourself to the Lord Jesus Christ, a poor, guilty, undone sinner, to be saved by him alone—saved by grace. You ought to go to him, just as you are, to be washed in his blood, to be

clothed in his righteousness, to be sheltered from the thunders of God's eternal law, in the security of his all-sufficient atonement. You ought to flee to Christ, like the man-slayer to the city of refuge, before he is cut down by the sword of the avenger of blood. You ought to go instantly, like the prodigal to his father, in all his poverty, starvation, and rags, as well as guilt. You ought to cry, like Peter sinking in the waves, "Lord, save me." But instead of this, you are just looking to yourself, striving to find something, or make something in your own heart, which shall recommend you to God. And in this miserable way, you are making salvation a far more difficult matter, than God has made it. You have forgotten the free grace of the gospel, the full atonement of Jesus Christ, by the sacrifice of himself."

"But," said he, "I can't repent and come to Christ, *of myself*."

"I certainly never said you could; and never wished you to think you could. In my opinion, God does not wish you to think so. And if you have found out, that you cannot repent of yourself, aside from divine aid, I am glad of it—you have found out an important truth. Most certainly God does not tell you to repent *of yourself*. He tells you, that 'Christ is exalted to give repentance.' He says to every sinner, 'Thou hast destroyed thyself, in me is thy help: let him take

hold on my strength that he may make peace with me, and he shall make peace with me.' On the ground that they need it, he has promised 'the Holy Spirit to them that ask him.' God never expects you to repent, without divine aid, but with it. He knows you are too wicked to do it, that you are without strength, helpless, undone, a *lost* sinner!—And here lies the very heart of your error. You have been trying to repent, in a way that God never told you, just by your own powers, instead of trying to get God to have mercy upon you, and save you by his help. You have been looking to the powers within you, instead of looking to the aid above you. You have trusted to yourself, instead of trusting yourself to the grace of Christ. And that is the very reason why you have failed; and now you complain, that you cannot repent; while, in reality, you have exactly the same sufficiency, as the penitent all around you. What has been their help, may be your help. And the sooner you are driven off from all that self-seeking and self-reliance, the better it will be for you. You are in the double error of undervaluing the character of God, and over-valuing your own. God is more merciful and more gracious, than you think him to be. He is more ready to save you. And when he commands you to repent, he does not wish you to forget, that all your hope lies in the immediate aid of his Holy Spirit. Nor does

he wish you to attempt to dispense with that prof-  
fered assistance, by your not believing, that you  
are as utterly helpless as you really are. He does  
not tell you to rely upon your own shattered  
strength; but you have done so. And when you  
have failed, you then turn round and complain,  
that you 'can't repent.' You reject his offered  
help—the help of the omnipotent Spirit. And for  
this reason, you will be the more criminal, if you  
do *not* repent. That Divine Spirit is your only  
hope. If he leaves you to yourself, you are lost—  
eternally lost! Tread softly, my dear friend!  
The ground whereon thou standest is holy ground!  
Let not the Holy Spirit, who presides over the  
souls here this evening, bear witness against you  
in the day of the final judgment,—‘because I have  
called and ye refused!’ You *can* repent; just in  
the way that others repent; just because God is  
your help. Trust him; and rely upon yourself no  
longer.”

As I was saying these things, he appeared to be-  
come much less affected, but much more thought-  
ful. His tears and his agitations ceased; and he  
seemed to hang upon my lips, as if he was listen-  
ing to some new wonder. When I had done, all  
was hushed as death; and in a deliberate, sub-  
dued, and solemn tone, he broke that expressive  
silence, saying:—

“I hope, my God will help me.”

“Let us pray,” said I;—and a short prayer, pleading for God’s help, closed the exercises of the evening.

I afterwards found numerous reasons for believing, that that was one of the most profitable religious exercises, that I ever attended. Among others was the case of my friend, whose expression had drawn me somewhat out of my proposed mode of conducting the exercises of the evening. He became, as he hoped, a true believer. He stated to me the exercises of his mind, his repentance, his faith in Christ, his peace and hope, and his reliance upon the Holy Spirit. His mind appeared to seize upon the great truths of the gospel, almost without emotion. He had no ecstasy, no exultation, no joy. He had only peace and hope. He told me, that his agitations had all been useless to him; that they were not faith and did not lead to faith; and that he thought “sinners ought to attend to the calls of God, in a believing and business manner.” And when I asked him what had kept him from Christ so long, he replied: “I was trying to make myself better—to have a religion instead of trusting in Christ. What you said to me that night, showed me my mistake; and I went home with a deeper sense of my dependence, and a clear view of the free grace of God to sinners, through the redemption of Christ.”

About six months after this, he united with the

church, and has continued to manifest an established and uniform faith.

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To cut off the sinner from all reliance upon himself, his merits and his powers; and throw him, naked and helpless, into the hands of the Holy Spirit to lead him to Christ in faith; should be the one great aim of the ministry.

Sinners certainly ought to repent, for God commands them to repent. But in my opinion, he does not design to have them understand his command, as having respect only to their own ability to repent, and not having respect to the proffered aids of the Holy Spirit. Such aids constitute one grand ground on which his command is obligatory, and sweep away every possible excuse. No man ever did repent without the Holy Spirit, or ever will; and this is no small amount of proof that no man ever can. Nothing seems to be gained by making a sinner believe that he is able to repent without divine assistance. Such a belief will be very likely to mislead him to a reliance upon his own shattered strength. And as to his conviction of criminality for *not* coming to repentance, surely there is strong ground for such conviction, since God offers him all the ability he needs,—*in me is thy help,—let him take hold on my strength that he may make peace with me.*

## A STRANGE SNARE.



A YOUNG man about nineteen years of age, a member of my congregation, was a hopeful convert to Christ, at the time of a general revival of religion. I felt a more than common interest in him, on account of my intimacy with his family, his own intelligence and education, and my hope that he would become a minister of the gospel. I had not so much personal acquaintance with him, as with most of those, who had been led to seek the Lord. He was very retiring, and it was not easy to know so much of him, as I desired. But I had often conversed with him about his hope in Christ, and knew him well enough to know, that there was something a little peculiar about his turn of mind, or way of thinking. But I saw nothing in him, that led me to doubt his piety. He was very attentive to his religious duties, and to me he appeared humble and devoted. I had often conversed with him about the evidences of

his faith; and just before our season of communion, he came to converse with me alone, in respect to his uniting with the church. He deemed that to be his duty.

After considerable conversation on the evidences of his piety, and the nature and design of divine ordinances; he said to me rather suddenly, and as if he had just thought of it:—

“My opinion is, that immersion is the right way of baptism.”

“Indeed,” said I. “What makes you think so?”

“Christ was immersed,” said he.

“I do not believe he was,” said I. “There is not an item of proof that he was. There are strong reasons for believing the contrary. But, suppose he was immersed. So he was *crucified*.—But *why* was he baptized?”

“I don’t know,” said he; “for an example to us, I suppose.”

“What makes you suppose so?”

“Why—why—I thought so,” said he, hesitatingly.

“And did you think he was *crucified* for an example to us?”

“Oh, no!”

“Why not? If his *baptism* was an example for us to follow, why not his *crucifixion* also?”

“I don’t know. I never thought of that”



“Does the Bible teach you that Christ’s baptism was an example for us to follow, any more than his crucifixion, or his fasting forty days?”

“I never thought of that,” said he.

“Was Christ baptized for the same reason that his followers are to be baptized? or was he baptized as an official induction into the priestly office, as Aaron and his sons, and the Levites were ordered to be sprinkled with water?”

“I don’t know,” said he.

“What does our baptism mean?” said I.

“It is a sign of the washing away of sin,” said he.

“Was Christ a sinner?”

“Oh, no!”

“Why, then, was such a sign applied to him?”

“Indeed I cannot tell. I never thought of it.”

“Was Christ’s baptism Christian baptism? was the Christian dispensation established at that time?”

“I cannot answer.”

“Had the Jewish dispensation come to an end?”

“I cannot answer that.”

“Was Christ baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost?”

“I never thought of that.”

I then said to him, that I had no objections to make against immersion, no fault to find with

those who practiced it, and no objections to his uniting with that excellent Christian denomination. But it was manifest, that he had not studied the subject very much; and it would be best for him to take time and examine it well, before he united with any church. He would then be better satisfied with himself, than if he acted hastily.

He cordially assented to this, and afterwards came to me repeatedly, naming some passages of the Bible, which he thought favored immersion; and as often as he came, I gave him my views upon them; which he confessed appeared to him just and fair. He could find no fault with them. In this way, we examined all the passages of the scriptures, which he thought related to the subject. He said he could find no more; and could not disprove or dispute the explanations I had given.

I then presented the passages and the arguments on the other side of the question; telling him to detect any error into which I might fall, and that I was willing to be a Baptist myself, if the Bible would make me so. But he did not pretend, that anything I said was inconclusive.

Some months had passed, since he began to study the subject and come to me with his texts on baptism, when he said to me one day:—

“What objections have you to immersion?”

“None at all,” said I. “In my opinion im-

mersion is a baptism acceptable to God, if those who practice it are conscientious; but I do not believe it is the *only* acceptable baptism."

Said he, "Would *you* be willing to baptize any one by immersion?"

"Yes; three things being out of the way, I should. First, if there was no Baptist church in the place, that the individual could attend. Second, if he had *not* been baptized in infancy. Third, if I thought he were truly conscientious in the matter, and were not making too much of that ordinance, that is, placing an undue reliance upon it."

"Would you be willing to immerse *me*?"

"Yes; on these conditions."

"Well," says he, "I have never been baptized, and there is no Baptist church here for me to attend. These are two of the conditions."

"But," said I, "do you think immersion needful, when you cannot, as you confess, bring a single passage of the Bible to prove it; and cannot answer one of my arguments and proofs to the contrary? You will have hard work to convince me of your conscientiousness and sincerity, if you are not going to be governed by a fair interpretation of the scriptures. A believer must have a Bible conscience. And if any one talks to me about conscience in any religious matter, and leaves his Bible behind him; I shall be very apt

to think his conscience needs a baptizing with the Holy Spirit, before I will baptize him."

"I do *mean* to be conscientious," says he.

"According to the Bible?"

"Certainly," said he, "that is the only rule."

"Very well; go to work. You have to convince me of your piety and of your conscientious belief in immersion, as being taught in the Bible; and when you have done so, I will immerse you, if you desire it. But if you become a Baptist, I advise you to join the Baptist church, not ours."

"I could not do that," said he. "They reject infant baptism, and hold to close communion; and I do not agree with them."

After this he often called upon me; and finally he did convince me, that he was sincere and conscientious about immersion. He confessed he could not show, that immersion was the Bible mode of baptism; and could not pretend, that I had misinterpreted a single text in defending my practice. But after all, he said it did appear to him, that immersion was right; he should be better satisfied that he had done his duty, if he were immersed; and begged me to immerse him.

"Not yet," said I. "A few questions first. What does baptism mean?"

He replied: "Just what you have often explained it—a sign and seal of the covenant of Christ, a

representation of cleansing from the pollutions of sin by the Holy Spirit."

"Well; in your opinion, is it essential on what day of the month or of the week it is done?"

"No. The New Testament does not limit us to any particular day."

"In your opinion, is it any matter what o'clock it is, when one is baptized?"

"Why, no!"

"In your opinion is it any matter how many *ministers* are present, when baptism is administered?"

"Why, no!"

"Well, then; in your opinion, is it any matter how many *other people* are present? If a minister and the person to be baptized are alone, like Philip and the Eunuch, would that be good baptism?"

"Certainly; I think so."

"Very well. Put on your hat. Let us go down to the river, and I will baptize you now. (He hesitated.) "Come, it is a fine, warm day—nobody will see us—I never will tell of it—it shall remain a perfect secret—come, let us go." (I had risen, put on my hat, and opened the door.)

"What do you hesitate for? Come on."

"What! *now*?" said he, (sitting still.)

"Yes; *now*. I want your conscience to be satisfied; and we have spent months enough

studying this matter. Come on. Let us go to the river."

"What! all alone?"

"Yes; like Philip and the Eunuch. You said it was no matter whether anybody was present or not."

He seemed confounded. But he would not go. I urged him. I appealed to his conscience, which demanded immersion. I exhorted him, not to violate his conscience—neglect his duty—and destroy his peace of mind. But I could not start him. There he stood, mute, confused, and ashamed. I urged him to tell why he would not go; but he gave no answer. The more I insisted, the more he seemed resolved not to be baptized.

After spending half an hour in this way, I said to him:—

"You have lost my confidence entirely! A little while ago, I believed you sincere; but I do not believe it now. If you were sincere, actuated by conscience, by a sense of duty, as you pretend; you would not hesitate to go with me and be baptized. But I cannot baptize you now by immersion, or in any other mode. I have lost my confidence in you. Have patience a moment; and I will lift the veil that hides your heart, and give you a little glimpse of what lies within. You thought it would be a fine thing to be immersed, to have the credit of an independent mind;—or

perhaps, you were tickled with the idea, that I and all the people should parade away down to the water on Sunday, yourself the hero of the scene, to be talked about among us. Such a baptism would make a good deal of noise here, and you liked it in your vanity.—That is your heart. You may study it at your leisure. But never talk to me about conscience again, while under the influence of such a heart.—You may go. I have no more to say to you.”

He left me, seeming to feel, that he had escaped out of the paw of the lion.

It was not three months after this, before I heard of his extravagant levity, and his sneers at religion. He became apparently very hardened; and in this course of life he continued for months.

But God did not leave him at peace in his sin. He was arrested in his career; and finally became hopefully a convert to Christ. He came to me, to tell me his altered feelings. And finally, when he was examined for admission into the church; he told me he was fully convinced of the truth of what I had said to him about his heart, at the time when he wanted to be immersed. He said he felt ashamed to own it, but it was true, that his desire for immersion arose very much from pride and vanity, and a desire to be popular. If he should be immersed, he would be unlike others; and he was then pleased with the idea, that peo-

ple would talk about him with wonder, and think him something uncommon in penetration and independence. But he hoped he had repented deeply and sincerely of all this ; and now he did not wish to be immersed.

He united with the church. I baptized him,—but not by immersion. He still lives a reputable Christian, after twenty years of trial.

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The snares of the devil are very numerous. Perhaps none of them are more common or more dangerous, than those which are addressed to pride and vanity. Young persons especially are exposed to these. When they begin to be attentive to religion or entertain hope in Christ ; if their pride becomes connected with religion or religious things, they are greatly exposed to take the gratification of their pride for the comforts of piety. A passion for popularity, the desire to be noticed, and known, and talked about, has led many a sinner into strange delusion. Spiritual pride is the worst of all pride, if it is not the worst snare of the devil. The heart is peculiarly deceitful just on this thing, pride



## FANATICISM.

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A YOUNG woman, who was a member of my church, came to me with the urgent request, that I would visit her sister, who was in a very anxious state of mind, and would be glad to see me. Learning that her sister had been a communicant in another denomination, and very seldom attended our church ; I declined going, as I was unwilling even to *appear* of a proselyting spirit. But she was so urgent, that I finally consented.

She lived in a neighborhood some miles distant, where most of the people belonged to another denomination. I immediately rode to her house. She entered the room where I was, and her sister, after introducing her to me, left us alone, that she might speak freely to me. I perceived she was very much agitated, trembling and sighing. I said to her:—"You seem to be very much troubled. What is it that distresses you?"

Says she, "I have been converted three times, and I feel as if I needed it again!"

“Take care,” said I, “that you do not get converted again *in the same way*. All that has done you no good. Has it?”

“No,” says she; “not at all!”

“Then, do not get converted *so*, again. You want a religion that shall last,—a religion to die with; and I advise you to get an entirely new kind.”

I conversed with her for some time, aiming to teach her the nature of religion, and to quell the excitement of her mind, which appeared to me to arise more from an agitation of her sensibilities, than from real conviction of sin. Her affections, more than her understanding and conscience, were excited. I visited her afterwards; and for some time her impressions appeared to me to become more scriptural and deep, and to promise a good result. But she was drawn away again among her old associates, at an exciting assemblage in the evening, where she professed to have become converted again. She was as joyful and happy as she had been before, and her religion lasted this time about six months.

The heart that has once been drunk with fanaticism, is ever afterwards exposed to the same evil. It will mistake excitement—any fancy, for true religion. Fanaticism is not faith.

When the affections, or mere sensibilities of the heart are excited, and the understanding and con-

science are but little employed, there is a sad preparation for false hope—for some wild delusion, or fanatical faith. The judgment and conscience should take the lead of the affections; but when the affections take the lead, they will be very apt to monopolize the whole soul, judgment and conscience will be overpowered, or flung into the background; and then, the deluded mortal will have a religion of *mere impressions*—more feeling than truth—more sensitiveness than faith—more fancy and fanaticism, than holiness. Emotions, agitations, or sensibilities of any sort, which do not arise from clear and conscientious perception of truth, will be likely to be pernicious. The most clear perception of truth, the deepest conviction, is seldom accompanied by any great excitement of the sensibilities. Under such conviction, feeling may be deep and strong, but will not be fitful, capricious and blind. To a religion of *mere impressions*, one may be “converted three times,” or three times three; to a religion of truth, one conversion will suffice. In my opinion, my young friend was all along misled by the idea, that religion consisted very much in a wave of feeling. Her instructors ought to have taught her better.

## A MOTHER'S PRAYER.



As I was very much engaged at one time, in calling from house to house, among the people of my charge, I called upon a young woman to endeavor to direct her attention to the subject of her salvation. I attempted to draw her into conversation upon religion, but did not succeed. She would converse freely about anything else; but on this subject she was very mute, only deigning a brief answer to my questions; and sometimes, not even that. I knew that she was greatly partial to me,—a very warm personal friend; and I wondered at her obstinate silence. On visiting her again, a day or two afterwards, I found her in the same state. About religion she was wholly reserved. As days passed on, I made many attempts to persuade her to deny herself, and follow Christ; but my attempts were all in vain. Almost the whole of her youthful associates had become Christians, as they hoped, or were prayer-

fully seeking the Lord. She remained almost alone; and I became very solicitous about her. I tried with all my power, to affect her mind: I explained the character of God, the law, sin, the work of Christ, the prospects of sinners. I showed the vanity of the world. I employed the promises, and aimed to melt her heart. Time after time, with the Bible in my hand, I directed her own eyes to the passages, and got her to read them to me. I marked passages and desired her to read them alone, carefully, and with prayer. Polite, amiable and kind as she was, she appeared entirely unmoved by all that I could say to her. I understood also, if anything was said about religion in the family, she would retire to her room. She would leave the table as soon as she could without manifest rudeness, if the subject of religion became a topic of conversation. Her mother told me she would not hear a word from her on that subject, when they were alone; but would leave the room, if she spoke of it at all. She had also abandoned all religious meetings, except on the Sabbath; and sometimes she was absent then.

Finally, one day, I called and said to her;—"I have called to see you once more, in order to speak to you again, about your salvation."

"I am always happy to see you," said she.

"And are you willing to talk with me on the subject of your own religious duty?"

“You can talk to *me*, if you please.”

“That is not enough. I *have* talked to you many times, and you are silent. You force me to talk in the dark; because I cannot find out what you think or feel. You will not even answer the questions I put to you. And it seems to me, that you must deem me intrusive, impolite and unkind, to be so often speaking to you on a subject, which appears unwelcome to you.”

“Oh no,” says she, “not at all.”

“Then, are you willing to talk freely with me, as you do on all other subjects?”

She gave me no answer. I told her, that at present I had no time for any other than religious conversation—that when I had, I should be happy to see her; but that now, there were many persons wishing to see me, and willing to converse with me freely, about the way of salvation; and if she did not wish to see me on that subject, I would excuse myself from calling on her again. She made no reply, and I began to fear she was going to cast me off entirely. I asked her:—

“Do you wish me to come to see you again?”

She appeared to be affected, but gave me no answer.

“I hope you will allow me to call on you again.”

She made no reply. Said I:—

“My dear girl, I have tried to do you good: I wish still to try: I have loved you and respected

you: I hope you will not cast me off, in this way I ask it as a favor, that you will allow me to call on you again, and aim to persuade you to attend to your salvation."

She manifested much emotion, but remained silent. Said I:—

"It is for you to say, whether I shall call on you again, or not. I will not force myself upon you."

I rose to depart; and offering her my hand as she accompanied me to the door, I said to her:—

"May I come to see you once more? I do not like to be cast off so, by one that I love so much. What do you say? may I come? I ask it as a favor."

She wept, but she did not answer. I paused and repeated the question, "may I come?" but she made me no reply, and I bade her good-bye.

The next day, as I passed the house, her mother saw me, and came after me in the street, through the deep snow, and begged me to call and see her daughter. She was greatly distressed about her. She feared nothing would induce her to seek God. I told her how she had refused to give me permission to come to see her again, even when I had begged it, as affectionately as I could; and therefore, I could do no more. I could not intrude myself upon her. It would do no good. And unless her daughter expressed a willingness

at least, to see me ; I never should trouble her any more. The mother wept like a child. " Oh," says she ; " what will become of her ! She refused to hear *me* say anything, long ago ; and now, *you* are going to give her up ! What shall I do ?" " You can pray for her," said I, " God can reach her heart." She begged me not to forget her poor child, and turned back towards her home, with tears streaming from her eyes, one of the most heart-broken mothers, I have ever seen.

The next Sabbath evening, that girl was at the inquiry meeting. She was entirely overcome by her emotions. She bewailed herself, as an undone sinner. She said she had resisted God—she had broken her mother's heart—she had destroyed herself, and feared there was no mercy for her.

After some weeks she entertained a hope in Christ ; but her mind soon became darkened and bewildered with doubts and fears ; and for some years, she never made a public profession of religion. More than ten years after she came to that inquiry meeting, I took some pains to visit her. She still entertained her hope, and still lived a life of prayer.

The cause of her yielding, when she first came to the inquiry meeting seems to have been, that *she was let alone*. Her mother had ceased to say anything to her about her salvation ; her minister was cast off ; her companions had ceased to solicit



her attention to her religious duties. She was left to herself. Nothing opposed her. And she found she was opposing God.

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The Holy Spirit leads to self-inspection. Such inspection is just the operation of a convicted sinner's mind. Sometimes, if he is just left to take his own course, nobody to oppose him, his own conscience will be the more apt to do that office. Aside from a deep sense of accountability, there will be little or no conviction.—But it was prayer—a mother's prayer, that availed for her. That mother said to me ; —“ I went to my room, after you told me you could do no more, and we could only pray ; and I prayed as I *never* prayed before. I felt that God only could help me ; and if he did *not* answer me, I could not think myself a Christian any longer.”

## EASY TO BE A CHRISTIAN



IN conversation with a young woman, who was awakened to a sense of her sin and danger, I was much surprised, at the perfect clearness of her perceptions. She appeared to perceive her guilt as a sinner, her depravity and alienation from God, her opposition of heart to his law, her need of the blood of atonement and of the help of the Holy Spirit. I could make none of these truths more plain to her, or more forcible. In telling me how she felt, she preached more powerfully to herself, than I could preach to her. I was afraid to say much to her, lest my words should diminish her impressions, instead of giving them more depth. But I insisted upon it, that God was willing to save her—that her bondage in sin was her own fault, not his—that she was unwilling to come to Christ, or renounce the world, or give up sin, or be indebted to Christ for pardon, or set her whole heart to seek God, or trust her heart to the power

of the Divine Spirit,—that there was some such hindrance of her own—that God did not hinder her. Still, she did not think so. She said she had such an awful fear of God's wrath, and such a desire to be a Christian; that she could *think of* nothing, which she would not do, in order to be saved. "Yes," said I, "you would do everything but one;—that is, consent to *do nothing*, and let Christ save you. You are just 'going about to establish a righteousness of your own,' and that is the great reason why you have not 'submitted yourself to the righteousness of God, for Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.'"

I left her abruptly, not giving her time for any reply.

I called upon her the next day. The first words she uttered, when she saw me, were; "Oh, how easy it is, to be a Christian! You have only to be willing, and it is all done. How easy, how easy it is!" "Yes," said I; 'my people shall be willing in the day of my power.'—"Is that in the Bible?" says she. "Yes; the hundred and tenth Psalm." "I wish I had known it before," said she; "then I should have known where to go. But, no matter; I know it now. I found that when I was really willing, it was all done. And when I prayed, God made me willing. It *was* he. It was all he. I did nothing, I *know* I did noth-

ing, but come to him humbly. He gives me peace, as I trust in Jesus alone. It is easy to be a Christian, when you are willing."

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Self-denial is indispensable to religion. "If any man will be my disciple, let him deny himself." And whatever difficulties there may be, (and there are certainly many,) in turning to God, it would be no easy thing to show, that any one of them does not lie very much in the will. A perverse will is the sin, and hindrance of unconverted sinners. They are not willing to be converted sinners. They ought to know it.

## PROSELYTING.



DURING the progress of a revival of religion, I remarked the absence of the young people of one family from our meetings, which they had been accustomed to attend, and in which their attention had been turned towards religion. They had become serious inquirers about the way of salvation. I had conversed with them. Their solemnity appeared to be growing more deep; and I was surprised at their absence. I soon found they had been very urgently requested to attend similar religious meetings of another church, and had yielded to the solicitation. They preferred to attend there. The young minister of that church was particularly attentive to them, visiting them almost daily, and sometimes more, and taking special pains to induce them to attend all his religious exercises. He would invite them, and urge them, and sometimes send for them. One of their parents told me, "how very much inter-

ested" they were in Mr. B——, and expressed the opinion, they "ought to go to church where they feel the most interest. And then, Mr. B—— is so attentive; they love him dearly; the girls think there never *was* such a minister; they can talk about nothing else but Mr. B——." I replied, that I should rather hear they were "interested" about Christ than about him; and enquired how they appeared to be affected on the subject of salvation. The reply was, "Mr. B—— thinks they are getting along very well; and they seem so happy when they come from his meetings." I asked whether they believed, that God had given them a new heart, and was answered, "No, not yet; but they seem very much engaged."

It was manifest, as I thought, that their favorite, Mr. B——, was tickling their vanity and pride by his visits and other attentions, which were encouraged by parental influence. Through the medium of a trust-worthy friend of the family I aimed to have some influence upon them; but it was all in vain. These three young persons were sometimes in our religious meetings, but it was manifest that they were dissatisfied there; and we thought their influence upon our other young people tended more to levity than solemnity, to fanaticism than to faith. But they did not annoy us long. They continued their preference for Mr. B——, they became his "converts;" and

within a year from that time, they had thrown off all the restraints of religion, and one of them all restraints of parental authority.

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An interest *about* religion may be very different from an interest *in* it. Men talk of being "interested," and "interesting meetings." This is all suspicious. It is commonly a mark of either fanaticism or pride, or of both. True religion is solemn and humble. And if it is happy, it is happy in truth, in God, in duty. To mislead souls is no trifle. The kisses of an enemy are deceitful.

## THE OBSTINATE GIRL.



THERE are periods, when the minds of unbeliev-  
ers are more than ordinarily ready to attend to the  
concerns of eternal life. It is an important duty  
to improve such seasons. Having called, one  
morning, upon several young people, and found  
their feelings tender on the subject of religion, I  
determined to keep on in this service. I therefore  
called upon a young woman, who attended my  
church ; and introducing, as gently as I could, the  
reason which brought me there, I found that her  
mind was fully set, against any personal attention  
to her salvation. I reasoned with her, as well as  
I could, explained to her some texts of scripture,  
and affectionately besought her, to give immediate  
attention to the great concerns of a future life.

She replied to it all in a very opposing and inso-  
lent manner, which I did not resent in the least.  
The more impudent *she* became, the more polite  
and gentle *I* became ; thinking in this way to win



her, or at least, that she would become ashamed of her want of politeness. But it turned out very differently. My gentleness seemed to provoke her to increased insolence. She found fault with Christians; called them hypocrites; spoke of ministers, as bigoted, and domineering, and proud; and “wondered why people could not mind their own business.” She became personally abusive to myself; and in her abuse, I believe she made some capital hits, as she drew my character. I bore it all, with perfect gentleness and good nature; but tried politely and gently, to persuade her to try to be saved herself, let what would become of the rest of us. Whenever I got an opportunity, (for she was very talkative,) I answered her objections and cavillings, as briefly as possible, determined to enlist her own reason against her disposition, if I could. For example; she said to me with a bitter sneer:—

“What examples your church members set!”

I answered; “I want you to be a Christian, and set us a good example. You are under as much obligation to set *me* a good example, as I am to set *you* one.”

“I have a right to my own way;” says she.

“Then,” said I, “other people must have a right to theirs. But surely, you do not mean to say, you have a *right* to be *wrong*. A wrong right is a queer thing.”

“Well, I am *sincere*, at any rate.”

“So was Paul, when he persecuted the church. He was very sincerely wrong, and afterwards was very sorry for it.”

“I am accustomed to mind my own business.”

“I thought just now you were minding *mine*, when you talked so freely about me,” said I; “and as to minding your own, let me tell you, your *first* business is, to seek the kingdom of God.”

“I *abhor cant!*”

“Those were the words of Christ, that I uttered I should be sorry to have you call them cant.”

“Oh, you are mighty cool!”

“Yes; I should be very sorry to be angry with you, or injure you, or treat you impolitely. I have no feelings towards you, but those of kindness and good will.”

“You have got all the young people running after you in this excitement, which you call a revival of religion. In my opinion there is not much religion about it! But I’ll tell some of them better. I’ll let them know what you are!”

“You may know me better yourself, perhaps; before you have done with me. And as to the young people, I am happy to know, that many of them are trying to flee from the wrath to come; and if we are mistaken about the matter of religion in this revival, I hope you will become *truly*

religious yourself, and thus give us an example and be prepared to tell us our error."

In this mode, I aimed to soften her asperities. But for the most part, she took the lead in the conversation, and kept on, with a more abusive talk, than I ever received before.

I took my leave of her, saying I would do myself the pleasure of calling again soon. She replied, with a triumphant air, and with an accent of bitter irony:—"I should be *very* happy to see you, very *indeed!*"

After I left her, I thought over the interview, and studied her character, with all the carefulness and penetration I could muster. I knew that sometimes convicted sinners would become opposers, just because they *were* convicted,—being led to vent upon other people the dissatisfaction they feel with themselves. And in such cases I have always thought it best to treat them with kindness, and aim to overcome their opposition by good will, and by letting them find nothing to oppose. But I did not think this was *her* case. She had manifested no dissatisfaction with herself; and though she was "exceeding fierce," I did not believe she resembled those whom the devils tore, before they came out of them.

This young woman was very rich, having a large property of her own, which she used as she pleased. She lived in the midst of elegance; and

several of the expressions which she used while talking to me, appeared to me to indicate that she was proud of her affluence, presumed upon it to give her respectability, and was fully resolved to enjoy the pleasures of the world. The costliness and elegance of her dress rather sustained this idea ; which was still farther impressed upon my mind, by my knowledge of the kind of accomplishments she had aimed after, while pursuing her education.

On the whole, I came to a fixed conclusion as to the manner in which I should treat her, if she ever ventured to talk to me in the same manner again. Evidently she felt, that she had triumphed over me, and was proud of her triumph. Little as such a triumph might be, I was afraid the pride of it would still farther harden her ; and thus I should have done her an injury. Her mother was a member of my church. I had always treated her and her daughter politely ; and I knew, or thought I knew, that the young lady supposed herself able to over-awe me. And if I should allow her to go on in this way, and to feel that she triumphed, she would probably become the more haughty, and hardened, and worldly. However, I rather supposed, that on reflection she would be sorry for what she had said, and be careful not to repeat it again. I very much hoped that she would. But if she should commence

such a course again, my duty was plain, and I resolved to aim to discharge it.

Accordingly I called upon her the very next day, and stated to her my desire to have some conversation with her, if agreeable to her, very frankly and kindly, on the subject of her duty to God, and to her own soul. I found her in much the same mood as before. She soon commenced her abusive style of remark about professors of religion, and ministers, and revivals. I allowed her to go on in her own way, without saying much myself, for about half an hour. I only aimed to pacify her opposition by mildness, and lead her to speak more reasonably, and feel more justly. She seemed to take courage from my forbearance, to be the more bitter and abusive. When I thought the fit time had come, I requested her to pause a little, and just hear what I had to say to her.

I then talked to her as severely as I was able. I told her there was not much truth, and not an item of sincerity in all she had been saying,—that I knew it, and she knew it herself,—that she knew she had been saying things which were not true, and affirming opinions which she did not entertain,—that she was just wickedly acting out the deep-seated and indulged wickedness of her heart against God,—a wickedness which I was surprised to find, had led a lady of her sense and

accomplishments to forget the dignity of her sex, and descend to mean and low abuse, of which she ought to be ashamed, and would be ashamed, if she had any delicacy left,—that I had entered her house in a gentlemanly manner, with respectful and kind feelings towards her, and had treated her politely and kindly in every word and action, both yesterday and to-day; while she had disgraced herself and her family by her abuse and coarseness, which were unworthy of any one who pretended to the least respectability,—that, on my own account, I did not care one atom what she thought of me, or said to me, for she was entirely incapable of hurting my feelings; but that I felt exceedingly sorry for *her*, to find her acting like a poor, wicked fool, “foaming out her own shame,” and boasting of her sincerity, when there was not an item of sincerity about her,—that, as for her influencing other young people against me, and turning their hearts away from religion, as she had yesterday threatened to do, I would take care to see to that. She might do her worst, I would caution them against her; and any slanders she might utter against me would only exalt me in the opinion of any one, whose opinion I cared anything about,—that she might indulge her wickedness, and rail against Christians and Christian ministers as long as she pleased; I never would attempt to stop her again, for if this was to be

her course, I was now in her house for the last time,—that I was sorry to speak thus to her,—I had never done it before to any person in my life, and never expected to have occasion to do it again; but I felt it to be my duty now,—a duty which I owed to her own soul, for I had never, in all my experience, witnessed such hardened and silly wickedness as I had seen in her, for which she would soon have to give an account unto God,—that if she had known no better, I could have had some respect for her; but she did know better, she spake what she knew was not so, just indulging the enmity of her heart against God,—that her pride would soon be brought low, and if she did not repent and flee to Christ, the time was not far distant when God would leave her to her own way, and at last she would have her just portion “in shame and everlasting contempt?”

As I went on to speak in this strain, she at first appeared to be taken by surprise, to be utterly confounded, as if she could not believe her own ears. But in a little time, her eyes were cast down to the floor; she buried her face in her handkerchief, and wept and sobbed as a child.

I did not heed this at all. I only continued to speak in the same manner, till I had finished all I had to say. I then told her, that I had done all my duty to her, and was now going to leave her forever. I had only to say, that so far as I was

myself concerned in her vituperation, I freely forgave it all, and hoped God would forgive it; but that I very well knew, it all proceeded from her enmity against God, which he only could forgive; and I besought her to seek his forgiveness, before it was too late.

While uttering this severe rebuke, I had stood with my hat in my hand, ready to depart; and when I had finished, I bade her good morning, and turned towards the door. She sprang from her seat, and reaching out both her hands to me, she begged me, with tears coursing down her cheeks, not to leave her so. She began to entreat my forgiveness. I stopped her instantly. "I will not allow you to beg my pardon. You have not offended me at all. If I have said anything wrong, I will beg *your* pardon." "No, no!" said she, while she clung to my hands in great agitation, sobbing aloud. Said I, "I must go; if you have nothing to say to me." Said she; "I hope you will consent to stay a little longer. Don't leave me, don't leave me. I beg of you to stay."

I did not intend to stay. But she appeared so overwhelmed, and I had really talked to her so severely, that I began to relent. I could not bear to add another burden to her heart.

We sat down, and she immediately thanked me for my plainness with her, and confessed she deserved it all. She continued to weep most piteously



and with an imploring look she asked me ; “ what shall such a poor, wicked creature do ? ”

I was entirely overcome. I wept with her. I could not avoid it. But I could not now converse with her. After several attempts I said to her :

“ I *cannot* talk with you now. If you wish it, I will come to see you, when I am less agitated.”

“ Will you come this afternoon ? ” said she.

“ Yes, I will, if you desire it.”

“ I *do* desire it. Now be sure to come. Don't forget me. Come immediately after dinner, or as soon as you can. I have much to say to you.”

I left her. When I returned, in the afternoon, she met me at the door, bathed in tears. She gave me her hand affectionately, but in silence. She could not speak. Her proud spirit seemed crushed. She was all gentleness. As soon as she could subdue her agitation, she expressed her joy at seeing me. She had been watching for me, and should have gone after me, in a few moments, if I had not come. She thanked me again and again, for what I had said to her. She told me, that when I began to talk to her so plainly in the morning, she was surprised, she did not expect such an address. “ But as you went on,” said she ; “ I was confounded. I knew what you said was true ; but I was amazed that you should know my heart so well. I thought you knew it better, than I did ; and before you had done, if you had

told me *anything* about myself, I should have believed it all. It seemed to me, that you just lifted the covering from my heart. I felt myself in a new world. And it does now seem to me, that I am the wickedest sinner, that ever was. Will God have mercy upon me? What shall I do? What can I do?"

I saw her many times after this ; and all our intercourse was most kind and pleasant. She sought the Lord and found him. In a few months she united with the church. I knew her for years afterwards, a lovely and consistent Christian, and one of my own most precious friends.

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This is the only instance, save one, in which I have ever ventured upon such a course of severity. I do not know as I should do it again. I thought it wise at the time, and the result pleased me exceedingly. After she became a member of the church, and an intimate friend, I conversed with her on the subject of my treatment of her at the time, when she said, I "uncovered her heart;" and she expressed her opinion, that nothing, but such treatment, could have arrested her in her career. She said, that while I was talking to her, at first she perfectly hated me ; but before I closed she

perfectly despised herself, and feared that God would have no mercy upon her.

There can be no question but the power of the gospel lies in its kindness and love, and that through such affections, rather than the opposite ones, souls are to be wooed and won to Christ. But kindness and love can censure as well as smile. There are circumstances in which censure is demanded, and duty cannot be discharged without it. And yet, to censure and reprove are things so uncongenial to the love-spirit of the gospel, and are apt to be so congenial to some of the worst feelings of human nature, that few duties are so difficult. None but a truly affectionate believer can wisely trust himself to utter words of severity to those who oppose religion. St. Paul had tears, but no taunts, for the enemies of Christ.

## CONVICTION RESISTED.



At the request of a neighboring minister, I went to preach for him, a day or two, in a time of revival among his people. Some of those, who were concerned about their salvation, came to me for the purpose of personal conversation, after the close of the first meeting I attended. The number of these continued to increase. But my ministerial friend seemed very sad. He would put all the services upon me: I could scarcely induce him even to offer a prayer, in public or in the family. On the second day that I was there, he came into the room I occupied, locked the door, and with much agitation told me the cause of his distress. He said he was afflicted beyond measure, his soul was cast down to the ground. He had a daughter about eighteen years of age, whose mind had been serious for months; and whose determination, to gain an interest in the great salvation, appeared to become more and more fixed; till about two weeks

before, when her seriousness appeared to diminish ; and now she seemed resolved to resist all divine truth and divine influences. She would not converse with him any longer ; and if any one said anything to her about her attending any religious service, she would contrive to stay away. He had come to the conclusion, to say no more to her ; and he desired me not to mention the subject of religion to her personally, lest her heart should be set against it still more.

I carefully inquired what had taken place, to change the current of her feelings so much ; but he could give me no information, or even conjecture. He had tried in vain to ascertain. I told him, I thought he might safely leave it to me, whether I should speak to her or not. I felt inclined to do so. He objected to it, but finally left it to me ; “ for,” says he, “ she will give you no answer, if you try to talk with her.”

I met her, once or twice, for a moment, in the course of the forenoon, as we casually came together in the hall or parlor. She did not go to church. After dinner, I seized an opportunity in the parlor to talk with her ; but I said nothing about religion. Afterwards I saw her in the garden, and joined her in a walk there. But while I aimed to become acquainted with her, and aimed to please her, I said nothing about religion. She stayed away from religious worship in the after-

noon. She did not appear to avoid me any longer. After tea, she came into the parlor, where I was sitting alone; and we had a very pleasant interview for half an hour. Not a word was said on the subject of religion; only she told me, she believed she "would go to church in the evening."

"Well now," said I, "you can do me a favor. It is difficult for me to know what sermons to preach, away from home. I will bring down my bundle, and get you to look at the texts and the titles, and tell me which one to preach."

Without waiting for an answer, I went for them. When I returned, I put them into her hands familiarly, and asked her to choose. She looked a little confused; but I went on talking familiarly about the sermons, and finally asked which she would have. After some little urgency necessary to my purpose, because she modestly declined making any selection, she handed me one, saying, "I should like to hear *that one*."

"Oh!" said I, "I beg your pardon for giving you *that*. I preached that this afternoon. However, it is all the better; for if you wish to hear it, perhaps you will allow me the pleasure of reading it to you, at home."

"I should be glad to hear it," said she, with a smile, "but I cannot trouble you to do that for me."

"Ah," said I, "that is your polite way of get-

ting rid of listening to a dull composition. But you are right: I will not bore you with it."

"Indeed I should not consider it a *bore*."

"You are a very rash girl to say that, before you have tried it,—‘Let not him that putteth on the harness boast himself, as he that putteth it off.’—But see here,—you and I must be a good deal *alike*. The very sermon *I* chose for the afternoon, *you* chose for the evening. You are only half a day behind me. You must try to catch up. I know we can walk together, and not quarrel,—we think so much alike.—But choose me another—any one you select I will preach."

Said she, "I am afraid it will be a foolish selection."

"Well, now! that is a pretty compliment to my sermons!—‘a *foolish* selection!’"

She laughed at this, but answered:—

"I did not mean the *sermon* would be foolish."

"Well, foolish or not, I must preach some one of them; so, please to tell me which."

She chose one. And I apologized for being so impolite as to leave her alone, by telling her that I must read it over before going to the pulpit.

By this time we had become quite familiar. Her reserve had worn off, and she appeared to feel at ease in my presence. It seemed to me, that it was about time to name the subject of religion to her; but on the whole, I concluded to wait an-

other day, and see if she would not *herself* commence conversation on that subject, which I should much prefer.

She attended church in the evening, appeared just as usual, and the next day, morning and afternoon, she attended and heard my sermons. I kept up my acquaintance with her at home, got her to select sermons for me, and tell why she selected the particular ones she chose, and debated the matter with her, whether she had hit on the right ones, for the object she had in view. This was the mode by which I first got a glimpse of the state of her mind. I became much interested in her. Her quickness of mind, her taste and refinement, her fine education and her amiability, together with an air of pensiveness, which hung around her, and seemed to creep over her unbidden, made me feel attached to her as a friend, and ready to sympathize in all she felt.

As she started to go to church, in the evening, I motioned her father out of the way, and gave her my arm. She seemed surprised, for she had evidently intended to avoid me. We had about a half a mile to walk; and as she had started before the fit time, there was full liberty for us to walk very leisurely.

I immediately commenced speaking to her on the things of the gospel, in the most delicate and affectionate manner that I could. At first she



was mute, but in a few minutes she told me frankly all about her feelings. She said, that she had been very much interested about her salvation, but her interest was all gone. She had ceased to pray. She had become disgusted; and she supposed the Holy Spirit had left her. At any rate, she felt no concern now, as she had done for many weeks, when she was sensible of her sin; and for some days, she had not allowed any one to speak to her on the subject.

“Perhaps,” said I, “you did not wish *me* to mention it. If you are *unwilling* to hear me, just say so, and I will be still. But I have become attached to you, as a friend; you have interested me very much; and if the thing *is* allowable, I should like to ask what disgusted you with religion.”

“I would rather not tell.”

“I wish you *would* tell me. I give you my promise, that all you say to me shall be sacredly confidential; and I assure you I will treat you kindly, and you may speak to me *anything* you think or feel.”

“I *was* very anxious for a while, but I am not now; and you would think me foolish, if I should tell you what disgusted me.”

“Not at all,” said I. “I shall think you dislike and distrust *me*, if you *don't* tell.”

“Well,” said she, “it was what a young man

said to me. He belongs in college. He was here a few days, attended prayer meetings, and sometimes made addresses, as he is going to be a minister; and one day, when he asked me about my feelings and I told him; he talked to me very harshly, because I had not come to repentance, and said that his prayers for me would sink me deeper in hell."

"And what did you say to that?"

"I told him, I hoped, then, he would not pray for me."

"That was right," said I, "that was right. I thank you for saying it. You taught him a good lesson. He had no business to be talking to you in that manner. If you took that for an example of religion, it is no wonder that you were disgusted. I am sure, it sounds disgusting to *me*."

"And then," said she, "after I told him *that*, he became still worse in his language. He told me I was the vilest creature on earth—he wondered I was not in hell—and I should be there soon. I was disgusted and angry, when he said a great many such things to me. I would not attend the prayer meeting afterwards, where he was. I thought, if that was the way and feeling of religion, I would have nothing to do with it; and since that, I have thought but little about it."

"When he told you, that you would soon be in hell, what did you say to him?"

“I said it was well for me, that *he* could not send me there.”

“Very well. I am glad you said it. It will do him good, if he has sense enough to profit by it. You have done rightly. *He* was in fault, not *you*. He is probably a proud, silly, impudent young man.”

“*I* think so,” said she. “And I was amazed to hear my father speak so very highly of him, and commend his faults, as I thought them.”

I then reasoned with her on the impropriety of her being influenced at all, by *anything* that such a heartless young man could say: and the impropriety of judging of *religion*, by such a specimen of *irreligion*: for surely, his *talk* was anything but religion, be his heart what it might. I besought her to take her own way, the way of her own conscience and good sense, uninfluenced by any man or minister on earth. I told her to think of it, how she was manifestly wrong, in being influenced as she had been. She said she knew it was wrong. I then besought her to seek the Lord now, as she very well knew she ought to do; and not regard what *I* said or anybody else said; but follow her own reason, look to God and he would bless her. She said she would candidly think of it.

By this time we had reached the door of the church. I preached the sermon she had selected.

Before pronouncing the blessing, I came down from the pulpit to the desk below, and invited all those who had no hope in Christ, and were willing to begin now to seek God prayerfully, to remain in their seats after the blessing was pronounced, for I had something more to say to them. I made an address to all unconverted persons, on the duty of seeking God now; and besought every one of them, not to be influenced by anything, but a sense of their duty to Christ and their own souls. And to furnish them a little time more for making up their mind deliberately, whether they would seek the Lord or not; I proposed to sing a hymn which I would read, and make some few remarks, as I read it. I then read the hymn:—

“Come, humble sinner, in whose breast  
A thousand thoughts revolve;  
Come, with your guilt and fear oppressed,  
And make this last resolve:

I'll go to Jesus, though my sin  
Has like a mountain rose,  
I know his courts, I'll enter in,  
Whatever may oppose.’

“Choose ye this day whom ye will serve; if the Lord be God follow him; if Baal, then follow him. Go thee one way or the other. Now is the accepted time: now is the day of salvation.’

“Prostrate I'll lie before his throne,  
And there my guilt confess;

I'll tell him I'm a wretch, undone  
Without his pardoning grace!

“ ‘The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost:’—lost sinners! lost! lost to holiness! lost to God! lost to happiness! lost to heaven!—lost!—lost!—lost!

“ ‘Perhaps, he will admit my plea,  
Perhaps will hear my prayer,—’

“ ‘Perhaps?’—There is *no* ‘perhaps’ about it. God says there is none! ‘Hear, and your soul shall live. I will make an *everlasting* covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.’ There is no ‘perhaps’ in the matter. Eternal life is *certain*, to the sinner who will seek God with all his heart. The *hymn* is right. It represents what a sinner feels, when he is just resolving to go to Christ. But let him fling his ‘perhaps’ to the winds! and let him *know*, that Christ will accept him, if he comes. ‘Come ye to the waters. If any man will, let him take of the water of life freely.’—Still *he* does not feel so. Hear him:—

“ ‘Perhaps, he will admit my plea,  
Perhaps, will hear my prayer;  
But if I perish, I will pray,  
And perish only there.’

“ And if you perish *there*, you will perish where a sinner *never did* yet! You will be the *first*

that ever went down to hell from the foot of the cross !

“ ‘ I can but perish if I go,—’

“ ‘ *Perish ?* sooner shall heaven and earth pass away ! ‘ *Perish ?* the scepter of Immanuel shall be shivered into pieces—the throne of the Redeemer Jehovah shall sink, if you perish there !

“ ‘ I can but perish if I go,  
I am resolved to try ;  
For if I stay away, I know  
I must forever die !’

“ ‘ *Stay away ?*—forbid it, O God of mercy ! Draw every one of us by thy love. May not *a soul* stay away to night :—

“ ‘ For if I stay away, I know  
I must forever die !’

As I read this hymn and made these remarks, an awful solemnity seemed to rest upon the congregation. All was still as the house of death. There was not a sigh, or a tear !

The hymn was sung ; and then I requested all the members of the church to retire, and all others, except those unconverted sinners, who were resolved to begin *now*, if they had not already begun, to seek the Lord earnestly and prayerfully. Those who would thus seek God, I requested to remain in their seats.—I pronounced the benediction.

My young friend, who was in the pew just before me, remained standing still, for a moment—then made towards the door—then paused, and sat down—then immediately rose again, as if to mingle with those who were leaving the church, opened the door of the pew—then paused—then stepped out into the aisle—and finally turned back into the pew and sat down, bowing her head upon the pew before her, evidently in deep emotion. As her father, who stood by my side, noticed this action of his daughter, he burst into tears, sunk down into his seat, and covered his face with his hands.

About forty persons had remained ; almost the whole of whom became members of the church, before the close of the summer. I made a short address to them, offered a short prayer, and dismissed them.

As they were leaving the church, I perceived that my ministerial brother was making his way towards his daughter, as if to speak with her, his eyes streaming with tears. I took him by the arm and held him gently back, till I could get before him. I met her myself at the door of the church, offered her my arm, and we walked home in silence.

I conversed with her, a few moments, the next morning before leaving the place, and never saw her afterwards.

Some months after this, her father told me, that a week after I left there, she entertained a hope in Christ, had since united with the church, and "is now," said he, "the happiest mortal in the world."

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It is important to be wise, in aiming to win sinners to Christ. The Bible is the only safe guide. Its spirit is love. It utters no denunciations against any who are disposed to treat the gospel offer seriously. To lead sinners to condemn *themselves*, is one thing; for us to condemn them, is quite another. If their reason and conscience do not very much second what we say to them, our words do not hit their case.

The snares of the devil are very deceitfully contrived. This young woman was right to dislike some of the things said to her; but she fell into a subtle snare, when she allowed them to turn her mind from truth, duty, and God. How strange, that she should suffer herself to be influenced so much, by the very man whom she disapproved and despised. Such is human nature.

I have every reason to believe, that this young girl was of a most affectionate and amiable disposition; and therefore, the coarse and heartless language of that young man was the more revolting



to her. If what he said was appropriate to her conscience, it was not appropriate to her heart; and if the matter of it resembled the truth of the gospel, the spirit and manner of it certainly had no resemblance to Christianity. Religion needs no such advocates.

This young man was a revivalist. He was fond of talking and praying about "revivals," and "revival spirit," and "revival measures." We have had so much of this in some parts of the country, that many Christians have been led into serious errors; and while, (like this young man,) they have adopted strange modes of expression and action, they have thought, and felt, and even prayed, just as if sinners could not be converted except in revivals; and thus the irreligious have been led to think it vain to seek God at any other time. An officer of my church once told me that he himself "*waited for a revival ten years,*" because he "had been led by the way in which Christians talked, to suppose there was little reason to hope for a blessing at any other time." By such notions about revivals repentance is delayed, prayer discouraged, the Spirit grieved, souls ruined, and revivals corrupted! The church and the world ought to know, that sinners may seek God and find him at any time, as easily as in revivals.

## DETERMINATION.

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AT the close of a religious service held in the evening, in a large public room, I requested all those who were not members of the church, but were disposed to attend to the matter of their salvation, to remain in the place, after the benediction was pronounced, and give me an opportunity to converse with them. I did this for the sake of convenience; as there were so many at that time, it was not easy for me to call upon all of them at their homes so often as they might perhaps desire to speak with me. And besides, it was quite likely, that some, just then, while the truth preached was upon their minds, and its impression had not worn off by their mingling with the world, might be induced to begin to seek God, by a request to take their stand at once. This, their instant duty, was urged upon them affectionately and earnestly. About sixty remained. Though it was impossible to have much conversation with so many, yet as

there were some, whom I did not know, and whose residences I wished to learn for the purpose of visiting them, I passed from one to another, speaking to them such things as I found to be called for, by their state of mind.

While I was thus employed, and the assembly was peculiarly still and solemn, we were startled by the heavy and rapid tread of a person upon the steps leading up to the front door of the room. The rude footsteps ascended the stairs, sounded along the wooden platform, the door burst open as if by violence, a young man rushed in with an excited, wild look, stamped up the aisle hastily, and flung himself into a vacant seat. He breathed heavily ; and with his head erect, he stared wildly around, with such a look of iron determination, as I never saw. Till that moment, I had supposed, that it was some evil-minded person, who had come in, to disturb us. The heavy tread upon the stairs, and stamp along the floor, so rude and hasty, contrasted strangely with the quiet and solemnity of the place and the occasion. But as the young man sat still, and only looked wildly, and breathed strongly, those who had been startled at his entrance became composed ; and I began to think, that he might have come there with no wicked or unfriendly intention. I kept my eye on him, as he sat with his head erect, but said nothing to him, till I had finished what I had to say to

all the rest. Still doubtful of his intentions, I went to him, offered him my hand, (which he seized with the grasp of a madman,) and seating myself by his side, inquired whether he wished to see me. Said he :—

“I have had a dreadful struggle. I have known, this *month*, that I ought to attend to my salvation. I went home from this place, to-night, and when I got there, I could not go in. I turned about and came back here, and when I got to the door, I could not come in here. I turned about to go home, but it was hard work. I got over the bridge; but when I was going up the hill to the gate, my knees failed me, my heart gave way, I felt as if I was fighting with God! I turned about and came back here to the door, but I could not get in to save my life: I was ashamed to be seen here. I thought every body would laugh at me, if it should be known, and I could not bear that: and I was afraid I should not hold out if I began, and then I should be ashamed of myself to go back to the world. So I gave it up and went off *determined* to think no more about it. But I could not help thinking. I stopped on the bridge and stood there a long time, looking first one way and then the other, and I could not stir a step either way. A man came along and passed me as I stood there in the dark, and I went on after him up the hill, till I got my hand upon the gate. But

I could not open it: I thought I was opening the door of hell to go in! I determined I *would* come back, or *die* in the attempt. But I was afraid to trust my resolution; so I ran with all my might and stopped for nothing, till I got my seat here.—I am a dreadful sinner! I have opposed God. If I do not gain salvation now, it will be too late for me! I have struggled against the Holy Spirit for a month! My heart has been too stout for me; but I have made out to get here.”

I conversed with him for a few moments, and dismissing the assembly, accompanied him to his own door, and bade him good night. In my conversation with him, I aimed to convince him of the mercy of God to sinners, through Jesus Christ,—of the necessity of faith in Christ, and repentance for sin,—of the free offer of salvation to be accepted at once,—of the hardness, wickedness, and obstinacy of his heart, which was every instant resisting truth and the Holy Spirit.

The next morning, early, my door-bell rang violently. I opened the door, and there he stood, pale, and trembling. “I can’t live so!” said he, with a look of agony.—“What *shall* I do?”

“Mr. R——,” said I, “you are very much afraid of going to hell, but”—

“Hell?” said he;—“I never *thought* of it! It is this *heart*,” (said he, smiting upon his breast,) —“my dreadful heart! It fights against God!

That is what puts me in this awful agony!"—  
Said I:—

“Your only hope must be in the power of the Divine Spirit to subdue your rebellion.”

“I find it so, sir. I have tried all night, and I am as much at war with God as ever! If he does not save me I am gone! Pray for me.”

This young man became at peace very soon. Two days afterwards I found him calm. He afterwards became a member of the church; and for the ten years that I knew him, he was one of the most devoted and constant Christians I have ever known. Remembering the struggle of that night, when he ran to get to our meeting, lest his heart should get the victory over him; he was accustomed to insist upon ‘decision, decision, decision,’ to every anxious sinner whom he addressed. Said he, “If you expect God to help you, you must be perfectly *decided*.”

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Decision is a vastly important matter with a convicted sinner. The Bible treats it as such. “Choose ye this day whom ye will serve.” A sinner must choose, or he must be lost. Nobody else can choose for him. Nothing can excuse him from doing this duty, at once. If he will not do it, he may expect the divine Spirit to depart from him, and leave him to his own way.

## THE MISERABLE HEART,

OR, DELUSION AND INFIDELITY.



My duty required of me, as I thought, to preach, at one time, upon the subject of church discipline. Late in the evening of the day on which the sermon was preached, my door-bell rang; and as my family had all retired, I went to the door, supposing some sick person had probably sent for me. As I opened the door, I was surprised to behold a young lady, a member of my church. I instantly thought some one of the family must have been taken suddenly ill, or some calamity must have occurred, to bring her to my house at such a late hour. I instantly inquired what was the matter; and I felt the more anxious, because I noticed that she was very much agitated. She did not answer very readily. She said the family were well, and nothing sad had happened. I could not conjecture what had brought her there. She refused to come in. As

she stood trembling in the hall, I told her she *must* tell me what was the matter, offered her any service I could render, and tenderly endeavored to soothe her agitation. Finally, she tremblingly and hesitatingly said:—

“I have come to ask if you are going to discipline me.”

“Discipline *you!* my dear girl; what do you mean? No. Why should *you* be disciplined?”

“Why,” says she, “you have been preaching to-day about church discipline, and I thought you were going to discipline me.”

“No, no! Why discipline you? What have you done to deserve it?”

She gave me no answer, but trembled so greatly, that I thought she would fall upon the floor. I was astonished. She belonged to one of the most respectable families of the place, was a very modest and amiable girl not twenty years old, and I had never heard a syllable against her. I could not induce her to take a seat in the parlor, nor could I persuade her to tell me why she had thought, that she was to be disciplined. I assured her, that I had never thought of such a thing—had never heard a lisp against her, and kindly intreated her to tell me all her thoughts, promising her the most inviolable secrecy. But she would not tell me. I soothed her agitation all in my power. I accompanied her home to her own door,



and begged permission to call and see her the next day.

I went. But still she refused to tell me what led her to suppose, that she was to be made the subject of discipline. And I did not succeed in getting the explanation, till I had conversed with her in private, more than once; had gained her entire confidence, and had promised her, that, be her case what it might, I never would make use of anything she should say to me, in any manner whatever, without her permission. She appeared so unhappy every time I saw her, so agitated and gloomy, that I pitied her very much. I thought she needed some friend to lean upon; and offering her all I could do, I had no hesitation in promising to keep her dreadful secret. She told me it *was* a secret. She had never told her mother, or any one else: it was known only to herself.

She then told me, that she had no religion, no hope! She knew, that she ought not to be a communicant, while in her unbelief; and she thought, that I had had penetration enough to discover her state of mind, in some way that she knew not of, and was determined to have her cast out of the church. She wondered at my supposed discovery; for she had never till that moment, as she said, "uttered a word about her feelings to any person on earth."

This disclosure surprised me; but it greatly re-

lieved me. I thanked her for it, and assured her of my fidelity to her, and the affectionate interest I felt in her.

But as I began to exhort her to seek God and explain religion to her, according to the scriptures; I soon discovered, as I thought, that I had not yet reached the bottom of the matter. Something seemed to be locked up in her own mind. I told her so. I begged her to tell me, if it was *not* so. After much hesitation on her part and urgency on mine, she confessed it was so. Most affectionately I entreated her to tell me all, so that I might be able to comfort her unhappiness, if possible; and might counsel her, in a manner appropriate to her case.

I treated her so affectionately and tenderly, that she became evidently much attached to me; and, little by little, she opened her mind to me very reluctantly, because, (as she said,) she knew it would give me pain; and I had "been so kind to her, that she felt very unwilling to give me any unhappiness, on a matter wherein I could do her no good."

I found, that she was entirely an infidel. She did not believe in the Bible—she did not believe in any religion—she did not believe in the immortality of the soul, or in the existence of a God. She thought, that man died and went to nothing, just as a tree dies—its trunk and its leaves and its living principle perishing together. And the failure

of mind in old age, she deemed a strong indication of its falling into non-existence at death.

She had become a member of the church, when she was very young, attending school, a girl about fifteen or sixteen years old. She said she was excited, in a time of revival, as others were; wept as they wept; attended the religious meetings appointed by the minister for those of her age, (ordinarily in the school;) listened to his exhortations; was affected by what he said; had fears of punishment and then hopes of heaven; and when a time was appointed for the examination of those who desired to join the church, she went with the rest of the girls. She thought then, that she was doing rightly, and never dreamed of any error or deception. But she thought now, that all those feelings were the mere effect of sympathy, fear and imagination. The examination for her reception into the church was very little, except an exhortation. Only one question was put to her, "how long have you had a hope?" to which she replied, "about four weeks." This, she said, was the only question, that any person ever asked her at all about her religious feelings; till years afterwards, when I first saw her, and finding she was a member of the church asked her, if she thought she was growing in grace. She joined the church; and had been regularly to the communion ever since, a period of about five years. She had not stayed

away, because of the great repugnance she felt to being made the subject of remark ; and for the same reason, she had not mentioned the state of her mind to any person whatever. She had been exceedingly miserable all the time ; had felt the need of some one to talk with ; and now, for the two or three weeks since she first began to open her mind to me, sad and gloomy as she still was, she was happy, beyond anything she ever expected to be. She had long felt conscious, that she was unfit to be a communicant ; that there was a wrong and a meanness in professing what she did not believe ; and she despised herself for it. But she supposed, if she should reveal her feelings and opinions, they would make her a subject of discipline, or at least, everybody would be talking about her, or pointing at her, as an apostate ; which disgraceful notoriety and scorn, she felt that she could not bear—her whole nature shrunk from it. And this was the afflictive idea, which had compelled her to go to my house, at that late hour of the evening, when she thought no one would know it, and when she came to me, with such a burden on her heart. “ Oh ! ” said she ; “ if I could have borne it, I never should have gone there. It was a hard trial ! ”

By this time I had become well acquainted with her, and could judge of the power and character of her mind, and the natural turn of her

disposition. She was no ordinary girl. She had an uncommon degree of intellectual power, and especially of keen discrimination. She was a severe reasoner. She grasped the points of an argument with the hand of a giant, after she had discerned them with the eye of an eagle. Often afterwards I had occasion to be humbled before the penetration and strength of her uncommon mind. She was modest and timid to a fault. Mind—reason, was her forte. She had not much poetry about her. Her taste, however, was correct, not only, as might be expected from the severe correctness of her intellect, but it was gentle and refined also, as might be expected from the amiableness of her affectionate disposition. A truer heart never beat or bled. She was all woman, all affection. A stranger might not think so; because she was timid and reserved in her manners, which cast over her an aspect of coldness. She had a fine education, moved in polite society, and was universally esteemed. The more I knew of her mind and heart, the more I esteemed and loved her.

She was now perfectly miserable. She was ashamed of being in the church, and would be ashamed to leave it. What to do she did not know; and saying, with a flood of tears, “Now, my dear pastor, I have told you all,—what I supposed I never should tell anybody, but carry it

with me, (a dreadful secret,) to my grave ;” she cast herself upon my kindness and sense of duty, to treat her as I pleased. “ Disgrace me if you will. I know you will do right !”

Being resolved to spare no pains to do her good, if God would deign to bless my poor attempts ; and fearing, that her sensitive mind would be too much diverted from the one thing needful, if she should have her feelings excited by the idea, that people were talking of her, I enjoined upon her to say nothing to any one about her religious feelings,—to keep on just as she had been doing,—to attend church,—to go to the communion,—and not be troubled about anything but her own private religion. I had some doubts about giving her this advice, to attend the communion. But she was a member of the church,—her covenant called her there,—now, she was going there only for a season, unless her mind became different,—and if she did *not* go, I was fully convinced, that she would become too much agitated and diverted in mind, for a just consideration of the matters which I was going to urge upon her attention. She was peculiarly sensitive. Her feelings were very delicate. She had been tormented for years, with the idea of her condition. She had despised herself for going to the Lord’s supper ; and thus deceiving other people by professing to be a Christian, while she did not believe in any religion ; and yet she

could not endure the idea of being exposed, and made the subject of remark. Moreover, she felt, that it was not *her* fault that she was a member of the church. She had only done what her minister, and others older than herself, had urged her to do; and if anybody was to be blamed for her being in the church, the blame was not hers, but theirs.—I thought so too, and frankly told her so.

In order to be as well prepared as possible, to lead her mind out of its dark and miserable error, into the light and cheering of truth; I wished her to tell me how her mind had been led into this infidelity,—an infidelity which really was just atheism; for she did not believe in the existence of God.—Her account was as follows:—

A few months after she became a member of the church, her excitement having worn off, she found herself just the same that she always had been. Her mind was the same; her taste, her heart, her delights and desires were the same. Instead of finding in religion the peace of mind, the delight in God, and the love of prayer, which she had been taught to expect, “if she would go forward and do her duty,” as it was called; she found nothing at all. With *her*, at least, religion was all a delusion.

Her next step was to examine into the case of her associates, those of her own age, who had joined the church when she did. She said noth-

ing to any one of them, but she watched them. What they did, what they said, where they went, how they felt, where they sought their pleasures, and placed their affections, were all matters of her continued and close observation and study. She saw that they were under some restraint, indeed; but so was she; and she thought it was the same with them, as she knew it was with herself; consistency with her profession restrained her. So far as she could judge, they were just like herself. If she had no religion there was no evidence that they had any. "Why," said she, "do you believe that Miss Susan M—— is what you call a Christian?"

"No," said I; "not at all."

"Or Miss Sally E——?" said she.

"No," said I; "not at all."

"Or Elizabeth C——?"

"No," said I.

"Or Miss D——? or Martha F——? or Miss B——?"

"No, not one of them."

"Oh!" said she suddenly; "what have I said! I beg your pardon. I did not mean to mention any one's name. I forgot myself. I am very sorry. Since I have become so well acquainted with you, and told you all my heart; I feel, when I am talking with you, just as if I was thinking alone."

"I should be sorry and half offended, if you did



*not* feel so. You did right to call their names; and you perceive I answered promptly. To *you*, I can say anything. I can trust you. And I want you to trust *me*."

These persons, whom she named, were all members of the church; were her friends and associates; had become church members about the time she became such; and I am sure she would not, on any account, have done them any injustice or injury. In my opinion, she judged rightly of them. I did not wish her to judge of religion, by their exemplification of it; and therefore answered her frankly, because I could trust her, and because I knew, if I did not give her my confidence, I could not secure hers.

Her next step had been, to look a little farther. She thought of all the members of the church whom she knew; to see, if it was not with them, just as she knew it was with herself, and had inferred it was with her young companions. On this point she found great difficulty. She studied it for weeks. *Some* of these people really seemed to be different from those called unbelievers. They seemed to be above the world, to have joy in religion, to be conscientious, to love prayer and other religious duties, and evidently they were sincere. It *did* appear, that there might be some propriety in saying, that such persons had a new heart. She could not account for these things, on the sup-

position that religion was to them what it was to her. But she remembered, that most of them were old people, who had not any longer a taste for the pleasures of life; and on this ground, she could account for their sobriety and much else in them, which distinguished them from other people. They expected to die soon; and it was natural, that they should not greatly set their affections upon the world. "You might *expect* that my mother, at her age, would not feel about the world as I do." But then, there was a difficulty—she could not believe them *insincere*—hypocrites, like herself. They evidently *believed* in religion, and evidently had some felicity in its exercises and hopes. But she recollected, that it was so with herself once; that *she* used to love prayer, as she thought; and enjoy the Sabbaths and the sermons. She had now found out, that this was all a delusion with *her*; and therefore, came to the conclusion, that it was all a delusion with them. "The difference," said she, "betwixt myself and them seems to me to be this—they have been so fortunate as not to find out, that religion is all a deception; and I have been so *unfortunate* as to find it out fully." On the whole, she came to the conclusion, that other members of the church had really no new heart, any more than she had—that they were just like herself, only, they were in a happy delusion which, unhappily for her, she had

found out to be a delusion.—All other churches and Christians, she disposed of in the same way—“happy dreamers,” was her description of them.

The next step was to examine, where this delusion, called religion, came from. It manifestly came from the Bible. She then examined the Bible very carefully for weeks, and she found it so. Ministers preached the Bible. Christians talked about repentance, faith, prayer, regeneration, peace, and all religion, just as the Bible talked. But she had now discovered, that all this personal, experimental *religion* was a falsehood; and therefore concluded, that the Bible it came from, must be a falsehood also. The *religion*, her own and that of other people, was only a delusion; and as it originated in the Bible and was what the Bible asked for; the Bible itself must be a delusion. She therefore discarded it, at a single dash.

She then found herself entirely afloat, on an ocean of midnight. She had no guide, and no certainty. All she could do, was to reason; and reason very much in the dark. And as she went on from one thing to another, she saw no satisfactory proofs of the future existence of the soul; and expected soon to die and cease to exist, just like a beast or a tree. She thought it more reasonable to believe, that the world was eternal, than that it had been created; and that it would always go on, as it does now, than that it would ever come to an

end. She saw no proofs of the existence of God, and could give no account of the existence of anything else; only, that *it happened to be so*. When urged to tell how it came about, that all these chance operations were such *regular* operations, and so strongly indicative of intellect and design—to tell how conscience, (for example,) comes to be such a liar about a *future* and fearful accountability, since it is so truthful about things here—to tell how it came about, that the very *ideas* about God and immortality ever got abroad among men, if they are only fictions and dreams—to account for the existence of the Bible, which told her with unerring accuracy the very inside of her heart, as no human being could tell; she could only reply, that she had “no answer to give; it seemed to her, that she knew nothing. All was in the dark.”

I then besought her, to take up this subject, and reason upon *one thing at a time* most carefully—not to be afraid to reason upon anything—not to let anything go, till she was satisfied about it—and not to dismiss the matter, till she had an established faith, and a hope fit to die with. I proposed to reason with her; and would not blame her but commend her, for overthrowing every argument, if she could. I offered to be an infidel and an atheist with her, if reason and truth would make me so; and I *promised* to lead her mind out of this darkness, if she would only at-

tend to me. I did not care what she denied or where she began. She might deny her own existence, if she pleased; and I would beat her, till she believed in it, by the evidence of her own senses. But I wanted her to get some one thing settled first, as a foundation, on which to build another thing, or a way, by which to reach another. I wanted she should have a bog to stand upon, in order to jump to another, and thence to another, till she got out of this dreary morass, with her feet upon solid ground. And I assured her, that my *only* doubt, about her perfect and happy success, rested on the fear, that her mind would *not stick to a conclusion* or a truth, when once demonstrated to her. If it would, I knew she would arrive, (perhaps not soon,) at an intellectual certainty upon religion, as clear, strong and full, as she had or could have, upon any other subject. And I entreated her to commence in an instant a careful examination.

She was very reluctant to do so. She said it would only make her unhappy; and she did not wish to think of the matter. It would do no good. She besought me to let her alone, not to care for her, but leave her to her own way; and I have always supposed, that she was finally led to the examination and study I urged upon her, more for my sake, than her own. She had become greatly attached to me. I had treated her kindly, had sympathized with her; and she had found it, as

she declared, "a precious relief, if not a delight, to have one human being, to whom she could open her heart." She finally consented to examine the matter of religion again.

I at first attempted to convince her of the truth of the Bible, as the shortest way of settling the whole matter; but I soon found, that some other things must for her be settled first.

By a course of reasoning I succeeded in convincing her of the existence of God. This took some time. She was a whole week over the subject. As I could not spend so much time with her in conversation, as I thought she needed; and as I found that she would sometimes waver afterwards, about a conclusion which she had once reached; I wrote down for her the condensed arguments, that she might examine them at her leisure, and refute them if she could, or tell me if they were not fully satisfactory. I had no need to expand them. She had fully mind enough to do all that for herself, and to understand all that they contained. I continued to do this for weeks, going over one subject after another; and she continued to examine and scrutinize, with an intellectual acumen which astonished me. She fought every inch of ground, and never retreated a single step till she was fairly compelled to it, and never suffered a weak or unsatisfactory argument to escape her detection. In this mode,—*she* first sug-

gesting her doubts or difficulties, *I* writing for her the arguments and proofs on the point, *she* reading them, and then, in conversation stating her conclusions or her doubts to me, and *I* responding ; we went over a wide field. I demonstrated to her satisfaction, such things as the existence of God, his infinity, eternity, immutability, omniscience, omnipotence, wisdom, justice, truth, and goodness, his creation of all things, and his providence over all things.—To copy here what I wrote for her would make this sketch too long.—As soon as she became fully convinced of God's existence and dominion, I insisted upon it that she should pray to him, and convinced her reason that this was her duty, and one which she ought to love. In this mode, all along, I aimed to bring in religious *practice*, as soon as I had established a doctrine or truth to found it upon. And when she made objections to prayer, which she had never attempted for years ; it gave me an opportunity to show by argument addressed to reason, that her heart, instead of being as it ought to be, filial towards God, was just what the Bible says it is, enmity against him. "And here is one proof that the Bible is true." And thus I prepared the way for preaching the gospel to her by-and-by, when she should have become fully convinced that it came from God.

By arguments addressed to her reason, I con-

vinced her of the accountability of man, of a future life and future judgment. There were some points on which I tried in vain to satisfy her fully, aside from the sacred scriptures; such as the goodness of God, and the certainty of eternal existence. But she had now gone far enough to examine whether the Bible is God's word. Of this she became convinced in a few weeks, mainly by the evidence which it carries along with it. I preferred the internal to the external evidences, as lying nearer the heart of religion, and as constituting, after all, the real ground on which the great majority of mankind must ever receive the Bible, as from God. And when she had come to receive the Bible as God's word, all the rest was easy, so far as the reality and nature of religion were concerned. Thus, after months of examination and study, she became fully settled in the belief, that the Christian religion is true.

This belief did not seem to comfort her at all. She had no hope in Christ, and was as far off from peace as ever. But her mind now rested upon an undoubted certainty; and this, of itself, was an ineffable relief, though containing no comforts of hope.

She now began to seek the Lord with great steadiness of mind. It was no easy thing for her. She had been deceived once, and remembered the bitterness it cost her. She was for many tedious



months an anxious inquirer, but she did not desist. She attained to a comfortable hope in Christ; and she yet lives, one of the most enlightened and established believers, one of my own most precious friends.

If these pages should ever fall into her hands, I am fully aware, that her delicate and sensitive bosom may be agitated by them; but I know, that her affectionate heart will forgive me for the publication. Only she and myself can know the original of this sketch.

She has told me, (I have it, indeed, in her own letters written to me long afterwards,) that if I had not addressed her judgment as I did, if I had addressed her fears or her hopes, or exhorted her only, she did not believe, that her "mind would ever have been led into the truth."—"Through my judgment," says she, "you forced a way into my heart: you made my own understanding and conscience preach to me. I wish ministers in their sermons would employ this way of *reasoning* more than they do."

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As nearly as I could ascertain, in my judgment, her opinion of the course pursued with her in that revival of religion when she united with the

church, was a just opinion. She and her young associates in that school were very much separated from older persons, when their attention was particularly expected to be fixed upon religion. Little was said to them in the way of instruction, but much for the purpose of impression. The great doctrines, the fundamental truths of religion, on which all safety rests, were very little explained to them. "It seems to me now," says she, "that all they wanted was to make us weep." They were not told what repentance is, what faith is, what regeneration is, the very things, which children, especially, need to have taught to them. They were merely led on, by excited and impulsive feelings, rendered the more dangerous by the quick sympathies of early life. Against such proceedings, her whole mind was now fixed. And in conversation with her, the idea was often suggested to my mind; how frequently ministers address children upon the subject of religion, as they ought to address those of mature age, and address those of mature age, as they ought to address children. It is children, who need instruction. It is the older, who need impression. Children are sufficiently ready *to feel*. The danger is, that their sensibilities will outrun their knowledge and judgment. Older persons are slow to feel. *Their* danger is, that they will not have feeling enough to impel them to obey their judgment.

Admission to the sealing ordinances of the church, especially in times of revival, is a point of no little danger. Our ministers and churches have too often erred on this point. It seems to be very often forgotten, that then, the popular feeling tends into the church; fashion is that way and sympathy that way; and all the common influences which the young are particularly likely to feel, tend to urge them forward in the same direction. Far better would it be for the purity of the church, and for the comfort and salvation of individuals; if some few months were allowed to pass, before the hopefully converted are received into the communion, especially in times of revival. I have no reason to think, that my young friend, of whom I have here spoken, judged wrongfully about the piety of her associates, whom she named to me; but I have much reason to know, that her judgment was just. I afterwards sought out every one of them, and alone they opened their hearts to me.

It is a very difficult and laborious thing for a minister to deal with such cases, as I have here mentioned. It will be hard for him to find time. But he ought to find it. He will seldom labor in vain; and while engaged in this field of duty, he is engaged in the best field of study. His work then lies nearest the heart; and he cannot fail to know the human heart more accurately, and learn

how to apply the powers of his mind and the truth of God, to souls ready to perish.

It is of vast importance to gain the confidence and affection of those, whom he would lead to truth and salvation. As I suppose, this young friend never would have opened her heart to me, had I not knocked at its door, with the hand of the most earnest and gentle kindness. I certainly loved her; and she certainly knew it. She yielded to love, what she would not have yielded to mere reason, or a sense of duty; and that, which began in kindness and tenderness of affection, ended in that peace of God, which passeth understanding.

It is very unhappy for us, that we have such a reluctance to disclose our religious feelings. The disclosure would often put us upon the track of a divine benefit. Convictions are often stifled, by not being confessed. Anxious sinners would always do well, to be more free to tell their troubles, to some Christian minister or friend. There is ordinarily either some great error, or some dangerous sin lingering around the mind, that sensitively seeks concealment. The communion of saints is a privilege. It is one way to attain communion with God.

## UNCONDITIONAL SUBMISSION.



ONE of the most distressing instances of anxiety about salvation, that I have ever known, was that of a married woman about thirty years of age, and of excellent character, as a wife, and mother, and neighbor. Her energy of character was her most remarkable trait. Her decision, penetration, and quickness were uncommon. She had had a religious education, and was now surrounded with religious influences. Most of her relatives and acquaintances were communicants in the church. Her husband had lately become a pious man.

She became concerned for her salvation; and seemed to me to have a peculiarly deep sense of her sins. She often expressed to me her wonder and astonishment, that God had not cut her down in her carelessness. She thought that her heart was more obstinate, than the heart of any other sinner could be. She was fully sensible of its enmity against God; and appeared to be fully de-

terminated to seek the Lord with all her heart. I thought, from this and from her ordinary decision of character, that she would soon find peace with God.

But, month after month, she lingered. At times, her distress of mind was inconceivably great. Many times I conversed with her, and in every possible way aimed to teach her the way of life. With all the ingenuity I could muster, I aimed to find out what was her hindrance, but I tried in vain. In her Bible I marked those passages, which I hoped would benefit her. She studied them intensely. She prayed daily and with agony. But yet she attained no hope in Christ, no peace with God or with herself.

I expected, that the hopeful conversion of her husband, whose exercises of mind had very much resembled her own, would have a beneficial influence upon her mind. But when he told her of his hope and peace, and exhorted her to flee to Christ; she expressed her gladness, that he had become a Christian, but her own mind did not appear to be in the least altered.

She conversed with me apparently with entire freedom, told me all her heart, and begged to be told what she should do. All I could say to her appeared to be of no avail. Her mind continued as dark and distressed as ever. And this appeared the more strange to me, because, within a quarter

of a mile of her house, there had been at least twenty hopeful conversions to Christ, after she began to strive for salvation; and she enjoyed precisely the same means and opportunities as they.

As week passed after week in this manner, I expected her anxieties would diminish, and the Holy Spirit would depart from her. But her seriousness continued, and her determination to persevere in her attempt. After I had exhausted all my skill to do her good; fearing that I might have done her injury, I left her entirely alone for some weeks, not calling on her as I had been accustomed to do, not saying to her a single word about her religious condition. Still she continued in the same way. At one time, I requested some other persons to converse with her, which they did, but apparently in vain.

At length she became almost frantic with anxiety. Her distress seemed intolerable; and I seriously feared, that her reason would give way, and leave her to a maniac's gloom. She now began to despond. Salvation appeared an unattainable good to her; and the strange expressions of her despair, (a despair which I could no longer alleviate with the promises and invitations of Christ,) were enough to make any heart bleed. I knew her endure the most horrid temptations, time after time—temptations, which I may not describe.

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I was now in the habit of calling upon her almost every day, as she desired. I parted with her one day in the afternoon, leaving her in much the same gloom and despair as she had endured for some weeks. On entering her house the next morning, I was struck with her altered appearance; and the first thought I had was, that her reason had fled. She appeared quite as solemn as ever; but there was a composure about her look,—a sort of fixedness and quietness of firm determination which I had never seen before. As I spoke to her, she answered me in few words, but quite rationally and calmly. There was no insanity there. I drew her into some conversation. She was rather more reserved than common, I thought; but evidently her distress of mind was diminished. She had no hope in Christ, she said, and never expected to have any. “Peace with God,” says she, “I know nothing about; but I have done quarrelling with him.” This expression led me to suppose, that she had come to the determination to dismiss religion from her thoughts. But in a moment afterwards, replying to an expression I had made, she said: “I mean to do all my duty.” I could not understand her. And after some half hour’s conversation, still as much in the dark as ever, I said to her:—“You seem to me, Mrs. S——, to be, after all, in a very different state of mind from what you were yes-



terday. How is it? what has brought you to this?"

"I will tell you, sir," said she, (with a deep solemnity, and a kind of awfulness in look and manner, which I have never seen equalled;) "after you left me yesterday,—and I had been praying to God, and thinking for how long a time the Holy Spirit had been striving with me, I came to the conclusion, that I could do nothing, and that there is no salvation for me! But I knew I was justly condemned. And I resolved to serve God as long as I live; to pray to him to help me do it; and resolved to live the rest of my life for the glory of Christ, and commend him to others. I determined to do all my religious duties as well as I can, to the end of my life; and go to hell at last, as I deserve!"

"You will find it hard work," said I, "to get to hell in that way;" and immediately left her.

She now had no hope. I did not deem it my duty to give her any hope. And it was more than a week after this, before it ever entered into her thoughts, that she was reconciled to God. All this time she was calm, solemn, prayerful, contented. She had made up her mind that she must be lost. She knew it would be just,—that God would do rightly,—and she was willing that he should reign. She determined to serve him till

death,—to do all the good she could to others ; and “ go to hell at last.”

But in a few days it struck her mind, that she was satisfied with God ; that she no longer felt any enmity against him or his law ; that, in fact, she loved him, his law, and his Christ. She then began to question whether this was not religion, after all ; and gradually her mind was led to hope. She afterwards made a public profession of religion, and lived as one of the most determined Christians in the world.

In those gloomy months before she found rest, she was manifestly aiming, with a firmness and decision perfectly agreeing with her character, just to *save herself* ; that is, to become a Christian by the power of her own will. And when she found it impossible, she as decidedly despaired. And then, as decidedly gave up all to God ; —“ I found I could do nothing more.” God saved her, just when she ceased relying upon herself. True converts are born, “ not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”

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There may be more truth in the idea which some of the old Hopkinsians intended to express by “ unconditional submission,” than many of

their modern revilers suppose. It certainly is not needful, that when a sinner flings down the weapons of his rebellion and becomes reconciled to God, he should be without hope; for as soon as he does this, he has a promise of God to rest upon. But it certainly appears to be true, that at that time he is not, in every case, really *relying* upon it at all. He is exercising submission,—not faith. Or, if he is exercising faith at all, he may not be conscious of it, and therefore, may have only half the comforts of it. And it is quite conceivable, that one may have such a sense of sin and unworthiness, as to exclude all expectation of eternal life; while, at the same time, he is really “reconciled to God.” He has, in such a case, exercised submission, a gracious submission to God; and therefore, his agitations and torments of mind have ceased; but his faith has not yet been brought into lively and conscious exercise; and therefore, he has no hope. This would seem to be “unconditional submission,” a “giving up of all to God.” In this state of mind he certainly cannot be said to “be willing to be damned;” but it can be said of him, that he does not expect to be saved.

It may not be possible for human science and skill, to analyze conversion to Christ. The gospel has probably made the matter more plain, than anything else will ever make it. And there are

not a few things in the gospel, which appear to place a *surrendry* before faith—yielding before trusting.

A poor Indian, of whom I once had some knowledge, who had been a very wicked man, but who became hopefully pious, was desired to give some account of his conversion—to tell how it was, that he had been led to his hope in Christ. He described it in this way, taking his figures from his way of life, as he had been accustomed to chase the deer and the bear, over mountains and through morasses:—Said he: “I was in the mud. I tried to get out; and I could not. I tried the harder; and the harder I tried, the faster I sunk. I found I must put forth all my strength; but I went down deeper, and deeper, and deeper. I found I was going *all over* in the mire;—I gave the *death-yell*, and found myself in the arms of Jesus Christ.” When he abandoned all attempt to save himself, Jesus Christ saved him. This was all he knew about it. And more, this was all there *was* about it. “Let me fall into the hands of the Lord, for his mercies are great.” This verily seems like “unconditional submission.”—But there is too much metaphysics in that phrase, for the work of hearts. Affection, like faith, is seldom metaphysical. Its depth lies in its simplicity. All speculation, which does not bring round the matter just to that spot, is useless for all *heart* purposes, therefore for all *faith* purposes.

## THE UNPARDONABLE SIN.



DURING the whole of one summer, a young woman of respectable family and of religious education was accustomed to send for me, from time to time, for religious conversation. She had no hope, and her mind was uniformly gloomy. She appeared peculiarly desponding. Time after time, as I visited her; I endeavored, as plainly as possible, to unfold the divine promises, and the fullness of Christ to meet all the possible wants of sinners, who will believe in him. Still she remained, as sad and downcast as ever. Her most common topic, was the magnitude of her sins; she was such a sinner, that there was no mercy for her. Repeatedly I showed the error of this notion, by the clear declarations of the Bible, and by the nature of salvation procured by the great Saviour; and most urgently pressed upon her the instant duty of hearing the gospel call, to repent and trust in Jesus Christ, while the Holy Spirit was striving

with her. I assured her, that no sinner need be lost, because his sins are so great, since "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from *all* sin;" and if a sinner perishes, he must perish, because he does not repent and believe, not because the merit of Christ is insufficient to reach the extent of his guilt, and not because Christ is not freely offered to him, in the full sincerity and full friendliness of God.

One day, as I was urging this point, and entreating her to be reconciled to God, yielding her heart to the persuasions of the Holy Spirit, she said to me:—

"I believe I have committed the unpardonable sin!"

"What makes you think so?" said I.

"Why—I feel so," said she, hesitatingly.

"What makes you feel so?"

"The Lord would have forgiven me before this time; if there was any forgiveness for me."

"He will forgive you *now*, if you will repent of sin and trust in the redemption of Christ."

"No!" said she, "I have committed the unpardonable sin! There is no forgiveness for me!" She wept and sobbed aloud.

Said I, "How long have you been thinking, that you have committed the unpardonable sin?"

"I have known it a long time."

"What is the unpardonable sin?"

“The sin against the Holy Ghost, which hath never forgiveness in this world, nor in the world to come.”

“What is the sin against the Holy Ghost?”

After much hesitation, she replied, “It is the sin that Jesus Christ mentioned—speaking against the Holy Ghost.”

“Have you been speaking against the Holy Ghost?”

“Oh, no! I have not done that,” said she.

“What then do you mean? What is your unpardonable sin?”

She gave no answer, and I continued to ask, “When did you commit this unpardonable sin?” She said nothing. “Tell me what it is.” She said nothing. “How came you to commit it?” She said nothing. “What makes you think you have committed it?”

“God would have forgiven me, before this time, if I had not committed it?”

“Before *this time*? What do you mean?”

“Why, I have been a great while seeking religion.”

“And because you have been so long seeking it, you think it is no present fault of yours, that you have not found it; but God will not forgive you, because, months ago, you committed the unpardonable sin? is that what you mean?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Very well,” said I, “I suppose you want nothing more of me, if you are unpardonable. I can do nothing for you, if that is the case. I may as well leave you. You may go to your closet, and tell God as you kneel before him, that you are willing to repent; that you are willing to trust in Christ, and willing to obey God in all things; and that it is no fault of yours, that you are not a Christian. Tell him, that the only thing, now in the way of your salvation, is that *old unpardonable sin*, which he will not forgive. Good-bye.”

I left her at once. The next day, she sent for me again. I found her, as I did not expect, in the same state of mind, brooding sadly over the unpardonable sin. After much conversation, and aiming to remove the difficulty, and assuring her of her error; she still insisted, “I have committed the unpardonable sin—I know I have—I know I have—I know I have.”

I desired her, after a few moments, to quiet her agitation, and fix her thoughts on the things which I was going to say to her. Said I, “I shall speak very plainly. You will understand every word of it. Some of the things which I shall say, may surprise you; but I want you to remember them. All along through the summer, I have treated you with the utmost kindness and indulgence. I have always come to you, when you have sent for me, and many times when you have not. And it is,



because I feel kindly towards you still, and wish to do you good, that I shall now say some very plain things, which you may not like ; but they are true.

“ *First.* You say you have committed ‘the unpardonable sin ;’ but you do not *believe* what you say. You believe no such thing. You know, indeed, that you are a sinner ; but you do *not* believe, that you have committed ‘the unpardonable sin.’ You are not honest, not sincere, when you say so. You do not believe it.

“ *Second.* It is pride, a foolish pride of a wicked heart, which makes you say, that you have committed ‘the unpardonable sin.’ Influenced by pride you half strive, (only *half*, after all,) to *believe* you have done it. You wish to exalt yourself. You pretend, that it is some great and uncommon thing, which keeps you from being a Christian. It is the ‘unpardonable sin.’—Pride lies at the bottom of all this.

“ *Third.* You have no occasion for this pride. There is nothing very uncommon about you. You are very much like other sinners. It is not likely, that you *could* commit ‘the unpardonable sin,’ if you should try. I do not think you *know* enough to do it.”

“ Why ?” said she, “ is there not such a sin ?”

“ Yes. But you don’t know what it is. And you don’t know enough to commit it.

“ *Fourth.* You are one of the most self-righteous

creatures I ever saw. You try to think, that you are not so much to blame for your irreligion—that you are willing to be a Christian, and would be one, if it were not for that ‘unpardonable sin,’ which you try, in your pride, to believe you have committed. You pretend, that it is not your present and cherished sin, which keeps you in your impenitence. Oh, you are good enough, surely, to repent, you would repent, indeed you would, if it were not for that ‘unpardonable sin.’—*That* is your heart: self-righteousness and pride.

“*Fifth.* Your wicked heart clings to this idea of the ‘unpardonable sin,’ as *an excuse* for your continued impenitence, for your living in the indulgence of sin, unbelief and disobedience to God, every day. Your excuse will not stand. You make it insincerely. It is not ‘the unpardonable sin,’ which hinders your being a Christian; but your wickedness of heart, your pride, vanity, and insincerity. I shall never again have anything to say to you, about ‘the unpardonable sin.’ If you had any real and just *conviction* of sin, you would never name ‘the unpardonable sin.’”

Some months after this, she called upon me in deep trouble. But now, her complaint was, that she had a wicked, deceitful, and hard heart, opposed to the law of God. She became, finally, as she believed, a true penitent, and professed her religion publicly. But in all her religious exercises,

there appeared nothing very peculiar, and she never named to me 'the unpardonable sin.'

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True light in the conscience is one thing ; and a deceitful gloom in the proud heart is quite another. When a sinner has any just sense of his condition, as alienated from a holy God ; he will not be apt to think of the unpardonable sin. Spurious conviction is common, but useless.

## ELECTION.

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AT the close of the service on the Sabbath, I gave an invitation, as I have frequently done, to any persons not members of the church, who were seriously disposed to attend to religion, to call and see me at my own house, at an appointed hour. In giving the notice, I explained briefly the reasons for the invitation; and besought those who were yet without hope, to give their instant and earnest attention to this momentous subject. Among other things, I stated, as one of the reasons for this invitation, that difficulties which occur to some minds on the subjects embraced in religion, could often be more happily removed in conversation, than in any other way. At the time appointed, and on the evening to which I now allude, a young man, about twenty-three years of age, called upon me. Adverting to my invitation, he directly told me his design in coming. He said, that his mind had been occupied with the

subject of religion for several months; that he had felt much dissatisfied with himself,—with his own course of worldliness; that he was fully convinced of the necessity of religion; that he had come to a determination to put off the duty no longer. But he had met with difficulties which he “could not get over.” The more he had tried, the more his thoughts had become perplexed; and though he had made up his mind on some points, yet on some others he was troubled and dissatisfied. “I thought,” said he, “I would accept the invitation you gave us to-day, though I have not much expectation of being satisfied about many things which come up.”—He seemed disposed to talk, and I did not think best to interrupt him. He went on to say, that some doctrines troubled him, and he could never agree with me in respect to them. He must have his own way of thinking, and had a right to it. “Yes,” said I, “if you think *right*; but you have no business to think *wrong*. If a man thinks wrong, he *is* wrong; and no man can have a right to be wrong, if it *is* his own way. God calls on the unrighteous to forsake their thoughts. Their thoughts are wrong; and he tells them they are not like his.”

“I know that,” said he; “but I mean my way of thinking about predestination, and all those doctrines that are so hard to swallow, and that

make a man unable to do anything,—nothing but a mere machine. I do not believe in election, and foreordination, as it is called. Such things have done *me* no good; and in my opinion, never will do me any. They only confuse me for nothing; and for my part, I do not believe them. I wish ministers never would preach them. I cannot see how anybody can attempt to do anything to try to be a Christian, if he believes in such things as election. Such a doctrine takes away a man's power, and then condemns him for not using it."

In this manner he continued to talk for some minutes, till he appeared to have no more to say. There was no appearance of any deep seriousness about him. He did not seem to me to have any very special concern about his condition, as a sinner needing forgiveness of God. Evidently he was annoyed and perplexed; but he had not said a word about his being a sinner against God, or in danger of his wrath, or unfit to meet him in judgment, or his need of any reconciliation to him. Some of his expressions reminded me of an anonymous letter which I had received a few weeks before, complaining of my having preached several times within a few months, on the doctrine of election; and containing some other erroneous statements. But I did not tell him so. I made no mention of the letter. But recollecting its contents, I felt more sure that I understood his

state of mind, by reason of that epistle ; and felt that I had an advantage of him, of which he was not conscious. After he had said all that he seemed disposed to say, I inquired of him, “ How long a time is it since you began to be attentive and prayerful on the subject of religion ? ”

“ I have been thinking about it, for four or five months.”

“ What was it, that first turned your attention to this subject ? ”

“ It was a sermon, which you preached on predestination.”

“ Then there may be some use in such preaching, after all, if it leads people to attend to their salvation.”

He appeared much confused at this answer, and remained silent for a moment, as if he knew not what to say. But seeming to recollect himself, he replied : “ Did I say there was no use in preaching about predestination ? ”

“ No ; I believe you did not say exactly that ; something near it however. But people often have said it, and *written* it ; and *you* just said, you did not agree with me in some doctrines, and ‘ did not believe in the hard doctrines, which make a man unable to do anything—nothing but a mere machine.’ And I wished to know what it was, that first turned your own attention to religion. I am glad to find, that the doctrine of predestina-

tion has aroused you, after all other kinds of preaching had been, for so many years, in vain. I shall be encouraged, by this example, to preach on the subject again."

"But I don't believe in it," said he, (with much emphasis.)

"Then certainly, it need not *trouble* you, if you do not believe in it; and we will drop the subject. Have you been *praying* to God to forgive you? do you pray daily?"

"I can't say, that I have *prayed* much. But I have read the Bible, and thought and studied about religion a great deal."

"Have you prayed to-day?"

"No; not to-day."

"Do you expect to be saved without prayer?"

"No. But I have no heart to pray."

"Indeed! Then your heart needs your attention, quite as much as the doctrine of election. The Bible makes prayer a duty; and we ought to esteem it, as a great privilege. As sinners, we do infinitely need God's blessing; and without it, all our attempts in religion will be ineffectual. It is no matter of wonder, that you are not reconciled to God, if you have not even prayed for his grace to guide you. If sinners would be right, and would be saved, they must obey God. And his requirement is plain: 'Seek ye the Lord while he may be found; call ye upon him while he is



near.' You must call upon him, you must pray, if you would have any ground at all for expecting his favor."

"But the prayers of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord," said he.

"That," said I, "is your own declaration. God has not said so. Such a declaration is not to be found in the Bible, as people often suppose; though there may be some expressions, which appear to resemble it. The *ordinary* complaint of the Bible against sinners, is not, that they pray with bad hearts, but that they do not pray at all, or seldom. They are said to 'cast off fear and restrain prayer.' It may be a sin in you to pray, with such a heart as you have; but it is a worse sin, if you neglect prayer. The Bible commands you to pray; and if you try to obey it, manifestly you are not quite so wicked, as if you do not try at all. The command stands in the Bible, and will stand there. Your want of a good heart does not repeal it, nor does it excuse your disobedience. Moreover, you need God's aid for attaining a better heart; and certainly you have more reason to expect that aid, if you ask for it, than if you do not ask at all. 'Ask and ye shall receive. Seek and ye shall find. Knock and it shall be opened unto you.' If sinners would be saved, they must consent to follow God's directions. You put your wisdom in the place of God's wisdom. His wis-

dom directs you to pray. Your wickedness refuses to pray. And then, your deceitful heart weaves an excuse for neglecting prayer, out of the badness of your heart, out of the very thing, which constitutes the strongest of all possible reasons why you *should* pray. Your having a wicked heart, instead of being a reason for *not* praying, is the very reason why you should pray the more earnestly. Besides, your excuse is itself the offspring of self-righteousness and pride. You wish to be heard, because of your praying so well,—with such a good heart. You are too proud and self-righteous, to think of being heard, when there is nothing in you to deserve a hearing. You want to make a merit of your prayers. A sinner must be more obedient and humble than this. At least, you must *try* to obey God, as you are not trying now. I do not say, that you ought to pray with an impenitent heart; but I say, if you have an impenitent heart, you ought to pray, and the rather on that account. One sin must not be offered to excuse another. And I say farther, that you have no prospect at all, of having a better heart, if you will *not* pray. Besides, you are inverting the order of the Bible and of common sense. You wish to *receive* the gift of a good heart *first*; and then, you will consent to ask for it. The Bible expects you to *ask* first. You wait to have a good heart first, and then you intend to pray for a good

heart! Strange inconsistency of a sinner's mind! A little more simplicity of obedience, and a little less of such proud and self-righteous and foolish speculation, would be far better!

“With respect to my preaching and my doctrines; no matter for your disagreeing with *me*. I am not your standard, and certainly you are not mine. I ask nobody to think as I do. I only ask everybody to agree with the Bible. If I do not preach the gospel, I am wrong; and you ought to reject all that I say, which disagrees with the word of God. No matter what *I* think. Let all that go, stick to the Bible. It seems very strange, that a man in your state of mind should mention your disagreement with me, while at the same moment, your own practice so much disagrees with the word of God, that you do not even pray.”

He appeared scarcely to know what to say; but rallying a little, he replied with some composure, “I believe I ought to pray; but I want to know the truth about religion, before I begin in it.”

“You *do* know the truth about it, my dear sir; enough to know, that God commands you to pray, and to use all the appointed means of salvation. And you can have no excuse of ignorance on that matter. Moreover, you take the wrong way to learn what you do *not* know. The Bible way is, “if ye will do the works, ye shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God.” As fast and as far,

as one knows the truth, he ought to obey it. That is the way to learn other truths. And that is just the way, in which every sinner on earth *must* practice, if he would ever gain anything in religion. What good would it do any one to learn more truth, if he will not act upon the truth, which he knows already? Such acting is necessary, indispensable, in religion. Truth is to be learnt by it, which can be learnt in no other way. The lessons of experience are the best lessons; and many times, what is to be learnt in that way only, is a necessary pre-requisite for learning even intellectually the things which lie beyond. You wish to 'know all the truth about religion, before you begin in it.' You wish for an impossibility. Religion concerns not your mind only, but your conscience, your heart, your habits, your worldliness, and pride, and vanity, and above all, your self-righteousness. If you will not aim to lend your conscience to it obediently, and your heart, and your habits; you might as well think to understand all about music without your ears, or all about beauty without your eyes, or all about sensibility without your heart. You never will understand the full significance of the divine precepts, till you aim to obey them; nor the full meaning of divine promises, till you take them for your own. 'Taste,' and then you will 'see, that the Lord is gracious.' The practice will give you light; and such light as you

cannot spare, when you are aiming to understand other lessons beyond. And because you have not been trying to practice the truth, which you *do* understand; it is no wonder, that your mind has become the more perplexed, as you said a little while ago. You perceive how it is. You have been disobedient: you have not renounced the world; you have not given your heart to God; you have not come to repentance; you have not fled to Christ, to save you from the condemnation of God's law. And therefore, God has not led you out of perplexity and given you peace. You have studied religion, but you have stuck to sin. You know you are a sinner, and know you ought to repent and flee to an offered Christ."

"But," said he; "if I am not predestinated to salvation, all my trying would do me no good."

"Indeed! That is a strange thing for *you* to say! You just told me, that you did not believe in predestination; and I have been trying to persuade you to let it alone. You said, you must have your own way of thinking; and you did not believe in the 'hard doctrines, which make a man unable to do anything—nothing but a machine.' And now, when I am trying to persuade you to do something, (just what God bids you, and what your own way of thinking bids,) you very strangely bring up the doctrine of predestination, as an excuse for your disobedience! You say, if you are

not predestinated, your trying will do you no good !”

He appeared very much confused and ashamed. He remained entirely silent; and I left him to his silence as long as I could with politeness. I then said to him very gently and kindly, “It is manifest, my dear friend, that you have fixed on no system of belief or practice. You do not know whether you believe in predestination or not. Your thoughts are perplexed and contradictory; and I am very glad you have come here to-night. I am sorry for your perplexity; but you will come out of it. I advise you to let the doctrine of predestination alone for the present, if you can. You have more important duties than studying it now. If your mind will be satisfied to leave it entirely for the present, and make your peace with God, you will be far more wise. I hope you will dismiss it from your thoughts, and seek God with all your heart. It is one of the deep mysteries of God; and you will not be likely to find your ideas clear upon the subject, till you become a sincere penitent for sin.

“The Bible presents this doctrine of predestination, as I think, only for three purposes. *First*, to teach men the character of God, his grandeur, wisdom, and incomprehensibility; and thus lead them to render to him the homage which belongs to him. If the doctrine is deep and mysterious, so

is God. Whoever believes in the existence of God at all, believes in an infinite mystery. And since he is himself such a mystery, we ought to *expect* mystery in his plans and providence, and not quarrel where we ought to worship and bow down before him, filled with awe at his amazing grandeur.—The *second* purpose is, to repress the audacity of the wicked. God would have the wicked know, that they cannot outreach him,—that with all their malignity, they cannot even sin but he will foil them. ‘He maketh the wrath of man to praise him, and the remainder of that wrath he will restrain.’ He lets them know, that his eternal counsels are deeper than their malignity. If they will sin, he leads their mind back behind the curtain which veils his eternal majesty, and lets them know, that his eternal plans are not to be thwarted by the wickedness of man, or malice of devils. He shows them, that God’s plans encompass them as with a net; that he has his hook in their nose, and his bridle in their mouth; and if they will sin, their malice will be foiled; they shall not sin an item but God will overrule it all for his glory; and all their disobedience and hardihood shall only defeat their own purposes, and bring just judgment on the heads of the willing perpetrators. You have an instance of this solemn and instructive use of the doctrine, when an apostle addresses the crucifiers of Christ: ‘Him being delivered by the de-

terminate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain.' Their '*wicked* hands' could only carry out his 'determinate counsel.' The counsel was his,—the wickedness was theirs. This doctrine, shows the wicked that there is a plan which lies back of their wickedness,—that they cannot overreach God, that they are hemmed in on every side by the plan and the predestination of the Eternal One.—The *third*, and main purpose of this doctrine is, (as I suppose,) to comfort God's people. The grand trial of a life of religion is a trial of the heart. We have sins, we have weaknesses and temptations, which tend to a dreadful discouragement. Sin easily besets us. We easily wander from God. Holiness is an up-hill work. Our feet often stagger in the path of our pilgrimage, and tears of bitterness gush from our eyes, lest such weak, and tempted, and erring creatures should never reach heaven. Devils tempt us. The world presents its deceitful allurements, and more deceitful and dangerous claims. What shall cheer us when our heart sinks within us? Whither shall we fly for comfort, when our hearts are bleeding, when our sins are so many, when our gain in holiness is so little, when our light goes out, and the gloom of an impenetrable midnight settles down upon our poor and helpless soul? We cannot, indeed, mount up to the inner



sanctuary of God, open the seven-sealed book, and read our names recorded in it by the pen of the Eternal. But we can know, that such a book is there; and that the pen of our Father has filled it with his eternal decrees, not one of which shall fail of accomplishment, as surely as his own throne shall stand. And when we find in ourselves, amid our tearful struggles, even the feeble beginnings of holiness, we know that God has commenced his work for us,—a work which he planned before the world was; and that he who has ‘begun a good work in us, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ,’ carrying into effect his eternal plan. Just as well as we know our likeness to God, we know our election of God. We know that our holiness is *his* work, a work which he purposed from the beginning. If he had purposed it but just as he begun it,—if it was a work undertaken from some recent impulse, then we should have good reason to fear, that some other impulse would drive him to abandon it. But when we know it forms a part of his eternal counsels, and is no *sidework*, no episode, no interlude, or sudden interposition not before provided for; then we are assured that God is not going to forsake us;—but deep as is our home-bred depravity, and many and malignant as are our foes, we are cheered with the assurance, that God will bring us off victorious, and ‘the purpose according

to election will stand.' We love to see our salvation embraced in the eternal plan of God; and we know it is embraced there, if we are his children by faith in Christ Jesus. We cannot read his secret counsels; but we can read his spiritual workings within us. We know the counsels by the evidence of the workings: and then, we are cheered and encouraged amid our trials, by the idea, that God will no more abandon us, than he will abandon the eternal plan which his wisdom formed before the foundation of the world. 'Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?' He had their names in his book before they had shed a tear, before a devil existed to tempt them.

"If you examine *the order* of the scriptures, you will find, that they never break ground with predestination. Predestination comes in afterwards. They do not present it to the mind of a sinner, at the outset. Indeed, they seem to avoid it. And in my opinion, a sinner should avoid it also; because he should follow the manner of the Bible; and because predestination contains nothing in itself, which can interfere with the plain and practical duties of Christianity; and because, if he will go out of the way of his duty, to meddle with what God intends about his destiny, he will be very apt to stumble in his first starting, and never take one safe or satisfying step, in the pathway of a true

discipleship. See how the order of truth stands in the Epistle to the Romans, the most orderly, methodical and demonstrative, of all the sacred writings. Paul goes over the matters of sin, the fall, the law, the covenant, Christ, repentance, justification by faith, atonement, holiness, hope, the Holy Spirit, depravity, the resurrection; and *after* all these, and not till he gets into the eighth chapter, does he preach the doctrine of predestination. He then presents it, to comfort and encourage believers, not to direct unbelievers. The comfort is simply this: if they have an item of holiness, they may know, that their names are in God's eternal book; that he has begun to do for them what he purposed to do from all eternity; and they are just as safe as he is unchangeable. 'For whom he did foreknow he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son. Whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified.' Not a link is left out. The whole chain is finished, and lifts to glory 'If God be for us, who can be against us.' Thus the apostle comforts believers by leading them to know, that the whole matter of their salvation was a matter of plan, and purpose, and provision, before they were born;—that it is not an affair, which comes in amid any uncertainties and fluctuations of time; but stands above time, as it

stood, before time was, in God's book ; and all the agitations of worlds and all the sweep of centuries cannot touch it.—You may find the same thing in the other Epistles. I beg you to notice, how uniformly the doctrine of predestination is recorded just for the comfort and confirming of Christians—for the gladsome cheering of way-worn and struggling believers, trying to get the mastery over sin. It is *not* preached for the direction of impenitent sinners. I beg of you, therefore, not to meddle with God's eternal decrees."

My young friend listened to all this most attentively. He occasionally asked some question, not necessary to be recorded here ; and I thought he appeared inclined to follow my advice. When I had finished all that I wished to say, he replied in a pensive and half musing manner : " Really I have got a strange heart ! I do not know what to think. What *shall* I do, if I am to dismiss God's foreordination ?"

Said I, " I have already told you. You ought to obey the gospel, ' deny yourself, take up your cross and follow Christ ;' seek God, and serve him with all your heart. It is the call of the gospel, which is addressed to impenitent sinners. God sends to them a message of peace and pardon from heaven—an offer of eternal life ; and lays it down, sealed with his own signet, at the door of their hearts. The message assures them of the good-

will of God, of a propitiation for sinners, full in itself and freely offered; and bids them welcome to all they can want. You have only to take the message, and you will secure the favor—only to agree with God, on the Christ-conditions which he proposes; and he will agree with you. He *calls* you to this faith in the blood of atonement: and if you will but believe him, and venture your soul, where he has embarked his love and ventured his honor; you have the pledge of all the truthfulness there is in God, that you shall be helped on to heaven. The Holy Spirit will aid you. Divine wrath will never reach you. A child of God, adopted, loved, cherished; you shall have all the securities which the power of God can furnish, and enjoy the smiles which he bends upon his children. *To this call* of the gospel you ought to attend. This is your duty. You may mistake the decrees, but you cannot mistake the duty. If the counsel of God is dark, the call of God is clear. And I hope, therefore, you will attend to the call, and not meddle with the counsel, till you reach the fit time for considering it. If you *can* do so, you will be the happiest. If you cannot, if your foolish mind, through temptation, will keep running off into predestination; then, go into the subject to your sickening over it; and till you have found by experience, that you have mistaken your beginning-spot. And remember, after all your attempts

you will have to come round to this at last. As long as you neglect the gospel call, and attempt to grapple with the gospel counsels, you will only plunge deeper and deeper into intricacies you cannot unravel. Let God wield his own thunder. You have only to hear it, and tremble. You cannot employ it. It was not made for an arm like yours. Lay aside your captiousness, and employ your conscience. Leave the decrees, and take to the duties. The decrees are God's rules for his own action, not for yours. Let me hope, when I shall see you again, to find your heart fixed, to do as God bids you; and to let Him do the work, which he has decreed for himself. Just be wise enough, to mind your own business, and let God mind his."

He left me. I felt confident, that he would follow my advice. The next Sabbath evening, he called on me again. There were about ten other persons present. I conversed with each one for a few minutes, commencing with the one most distant from him, in order that he might be influenced by their thoughts, and the truths of God, which I should utter for their direction. I thought nothing could have been more happily adapted to do him good, than what was said by some of these persons. One of them spoke of the wonderful goodness of God towards him, during all his life; and mourned that he had himself done nothing

but abuse it, ungratefully forgetting God. He wondered that God had spared him, such an unworthy sinner.—Another one said, that her heart would not *feel*. She could not make it feel. She had tried, but though she knew she was a sinner, justly condemned by the law and graciously invited to Christ; still, her base heart would neither break by God's awful terrors, nor melt under his amazing love.—Another said, that all his attempts in religion had been in vain—that his prayers and resolutions had all failed him—that the opposition of his heart to God had seemed to increase; until he had been led to see, there was only one hope for him, *God had promised to save guilty sinners, who would trust to Christ*. Now, he just rested on that promise; and was troubled and tormented no more. His heart was at peace. He looked to Jesus Christ to save him, and blessed God, that the Holy Spirit had led him to this rest. He would not go back to the world, for all it could offer.—Another said, that he feared the anger of God. He knew he deserved it. He feared there was no mercy for him. He would give all the world, if it were his, to be the meanest and most miserable Christian there is in it.

As the young man listened to these expressions and the replies which were made to them, he became very uneasy. He changed his position often. A cast of impatience spread over his countenance.

His eye was restless. A cloud hung upon his brow. Before I spoke to him, I determined not to allow him to utter any cavils about election, in the ears of those who were present. As I asked him, whether he had accepted the proposals, which God makes to sinners, to save them by grace through Jesus Christ; he answered, with an abruptness and in a tone, which surprised us all:—"If God foreordains everything, I can't see why we are to be condemned for sin."

"St. Paul," said I, (in a slow and solemn manner,) "has given an answer to that, and I have no other to give. When one said to him, 'why doth God yet find fault? who hath resisted his will?' Paul answered; 'nay, but, oh man, who art thou, that repliest against God?'" And without giving him time for another word, I addressed myself to the next individual. I said no more to him. And after prayer, I bade him good night at the door; taking care, that he should leave the house when the others left it, having no farther opportunity to speak to me.

The next evening save one, he came to see me again. He apologized for calling so soon, saying he could not wait till Sunday, and he wished to see me alone. He immediately began to speak of election. He said he had tried, but he could not expel the idea from his mind. It would come up. He believed the devil put it into his mind, for it



would occur to him, in prayer, in reading, in all that he attempted to do, or think of. He said he could not make up any mind about it; but he wanted to tell me what would occur to his thoughts, and see if I could assist him. He then went on to say, that he believed in God's foreknowledge, but *decrees* troubled him. He could not reconcile predestination and free-will. Another time, he would think, if he was to be saved he would be; if not, he could not help himself. Sometimes he thought the doctrine discouraging, and felt opposed to God, as if he were a hard Master. At other times, he felt vexed with himself. So, he was tossed about, without peace, and often tormented with the fear, that he should never have any religion. And he wanted me to tell him what was the matter, and what he had to do, and what he should think, about this doctrine of election. After he had said all that he wished, I replied to him:—

“I am glad to see you. I thank you for coming to me. I am sorry you find yourself in so much unnecessary trouble; and I am perfectly willing to tell you all I know about the doctrine which troubles you. But before I enter upon the subject, I wish to tell you again, that probably I cannot satisfy your mind at all. I can drive you from some of your errors, but I cannot satisfy you.”

“Why not?” said he, anxiously.

“Simply because *you are not satisfied with God*. You are opposed to him. There lies your whole difficulty. The idea of his eternal sovereignty brings him clearly to your mind; and you dislike the doctrine, just because your heart dislikes God. Your head may be wrong in many things, but your heart is wrong in everything. You need a new heart. If you were truly reconciled to God, you would be reconciled to predestination,—not as you have mis-stated it, but as it is in truth. And I wish you to remember this; and remember what I told you before, that after all your studying, and questioning, and battling, about the *divine decrees*, you will be obliged, at last, to come round to the *divine call* to begin with,—a call which bids you to repent, and bids you welcome to all that full and free salvation which God has provided for you.—Let me tell you a fact. Not long since a clergyman of your acquaintance came down from the pulpit in the city of New York, after he had been preaching on the sovereignty of God, when a woman of excellent mind and education came up to him at the foot of the pulpit-stairs, and thanked him very warmly for that sermon. ‘Oh, sir,’ said she, ‘it has done me good. All my life I have been troubled with the doctrine of election. I have studied it for more than twenty years in vain. But now I

know what has been the matter, *I have never been entirely willing, that God should be God.*—And when you are entirely willing, that ‘God should be God,’ election will trouble you no longer.

“I desire you to remember also, that I do not preach predestination to you to-night, (as I am about to do,) by any choice of my own, but because you will have it so,—because you cannot be persuaded by all I have said to you, not to meddle with dark and inscrutable counsels, but attend to God’s plain and practical call. I can correct some of your errors, but I cannot make a carnal mind, which is enmity against God, satisfied with God’s eternal foreordination, and with God himself.”

“I assure you,” said he, “I tried to dismiss the subject, but I could not. And I am very anxious to have you settle my difficulties, if you can. At least, tell me what you think about such things as I mentioned when I came in.”

“Then hear me,” said I, “and I will be as brief as I can.

“First, let me say, the doctrine of predestination is not mine. It is God’s. He has put it in his sacred book, and neither you nor I can put it out. He put it there because he wanted it there; and whatever men may think of its uselessness, God does not need their instructions. He will not receive their criticisms. He will

frown upon their contentions. Such words as 'election, purpose, predestination,' are in the Bible. They mean something. We are bound to know what they mean, and to love the meaning. The doctrine is in the Bible. Predestination and the word of God will stand or fall together.

"Predestination is God's eternal purpose to rule his universe, *just as* he does rule it. If any man is satisfied with God's *ruling*, as he does; I cannot understand why he should have any *dissatisfaction* with his *pre-determination* to rule just so. His pre-determination is only the eternal plan of his government,—only his eternal decree.

"The decrees of God are rules for his own action,—not for ours. They are nothing more than his own wise plans, eternal and unchangeable, according to which he chooses to act. If he had no such plans he could not be wise; he would be acting at mere hap-hazard, not knowing why he made the world, or what was going to be the result! If he has formed his plans or changed them *since* time began, then he is a changeable Being, his dignity is sunk, and all security to the universe is sunk with it. For he may change again; and what will come yet, or what *he* will become, no mind can conjecture! So far as government is concerned, it is nothing to you whether he forms the plan for his day's work every morning, or formed it from eternity. Plan he must

have before he acts, or else he is the least wise of all intelligent beings in the universe! Until he acts, you know nothing of his plans, his predestination; and therefore, so far as plan or execution of it is concerned, it matters not to you whether he is now foreordaining moment by moment, or from all eternity foreordained whatsoever comes to pass. His decrees are not laws for his creatures, but rules for *himself*. They are not statutes, addressed to *will*, and demanding obedience, or compelling it. They are only his wise, holy, and eternal purposes, wherein he has determined beforehand what he will do, and how he will do it. You may not like the method by which he makes the sun burn, the ocean heave, or the lost Pleiad go out,—by which he directs the earthquake, the storm, the death-wing of the pestilence, or manages his angels, men, and devils. But he has a way of his own, he has considered it well, he has not asked your advice; and you would do well to pause a little, before you venture any more criticisms upon ‘that high and lofty One who inhabiteth eternity!’ Just consent to *let God be God.*”

“Do you say,” said he, “that the decrees of God affect only his acts? do they not affect ours also?”

“I say, that they are *rules* for only his own acts, and do not affect ours *directly*. How *can* they affect ours? They are even unknown to us.

They are his secret purposes, locked up in his own mind, and never known to an angel in heaven, till he chooses to make them known. A secret purpose in my mind cannot affect you. You do not see it, feel it, hear it, or know anything about it. It cannot affect you. You may think I *have* it, and the thought of it may affect you; and that is all. Just so it is with God's foreordination. It touches nobody. No one feels it. It does not hit a man's head, or feet, or fingers, or heart—it absolutely affects *nothing at all*; until God pleases to proceed to *act* upon it, and carry it into execution. It is this execution *only*, which affects anything. It is God's *government*, and nothing *but* his government, which is felt, or which influences anybody.—If therefore, you must complain, shift your ground of complaining. Complain of God's government, of his providence; and not of those secret decrees, which you know nothing about, and which never touch you.”

“Well,” said he, “this is new to me. I never thought of it before.—But, if I understand you, we have nothing to do with the decrees of God.”

“Nobody ever told you we had anything to do with them;—except to consent, that God should *have* them, and execute them. I am sure I tried, with all my might, to persuade you not to meddle with them; but to obey the gospel call, and let God take care of his decrees.”

“But how,” said he, “do you reconcile foreordination and free agency?”

“I never try : for the best of all reasons ; they *need* no reconciling. They are not at war with each other. If you will get them quarreling, I will soon put them at peace. Things need reconciling, only when they conflict.—Here are but two propositions. *First*, God foreordains whatsoever comes to pass. *Second*, Man is a free agent. One of these propositions does not contradict the other. If it did, one or both would be false, and we would abandon the falsehood. But there is no conflict or inconsistency between them. I defy you to show any. I know, indeed, men have often said it, and sung it,

‘God can’t decree  
And man be free:’—

but they have never *proved* it, and never will. They have never shown any inconsistency between Election and Free-will. In our church standards, (which explain how we understand the Bible,) we have one chapter, ‘on God’s eternal decree ;’ another ‘on Free-will.’ One affirms ; ‘God, from all eternity, did unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass.’ The other affirms : ‘God hath endued the will of man with that natural liberty, that it is neither forced, nor by any absolute necessity of nature, determined to good or

evil.' God foreordained that man should be a free agent,—and he is one. The eternal decree has secured his free agency. God predestinated the freedom of the human will.—Hence, man is free when he sins, and free when he repents of sin : he is free when he hates God, and free when he loves him : he is free when he neglects the great salvation, and free when he seeks God with all his heart. His bondage in sin is a willing bondage. And yet, it is true, that he cannot save himself ; but infinitely needs the direct power of the Holy Spirit, to renew his obstinate will, and 'persuade and enable him to embrace Jesus Christ' for salvation. Aside from this Holy Spirit, there is not an item of hope for him, as there is not an item of ability in him. 'He hath wholly lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation.'—But, he is free. If he sins, he sins freely—he chooses to sin.

“ But take another view of this matter. Truths are always consistent, and must be so. Here is one truth ; God predestinates. The Bible says so ; and aside from the Bible, I know it by my own reason, just as well as I know, that God is wise enough to have some plan for his actions. That, then, is a truth ; God predestinates.

“ Here is another truth ; man is free. He knows this by his own consciousness. He knows, that he acts of his own free choice, just as well as



he knows his own existence. He feels accountable for his actions. The laws of both man and God hold him accountable. All his neighbors deal with him, as a free and accountable being. He has not himself a doubt on the subject. If he believes he is not free, he is not an ordinary man—he is either a fool or a madman, and I would as soon reason with a rock. If a man tells you he is not free, that he does not act of his own free-will: give him a blistering cap and a strait-jacket, and send him to the mad-house. The man is a maniac. He is unfit to be at large.

“Here then are two truths. God decrees. Man is a free agent. Each of them is fully proved. Each of them is just as certain to every sane and intelligent man, as any truth in the universe. Therefore, they must be consistent. They need no reconciling.”

“I know I am *free*,” said he.

“And you know God foreordains,” said I.

“Yes,” said he; “it must be so. The Bible says so; and he could not be a wise God without it.”

“That, then, is enough,” said I. “What more do you want?”

He sat a long time in silence, manifestly in deep thought. At length he asked very modestly; “But if God foreordains to eternal life, why have men got anything to do, in order to be saved!”

“Just because God foreordained they *shall* have

something to do, in order to be saved. God has no more foreordained the end, than he has foreordained the means. He decrees no end, without decreeing the means to reach it. After St. Paul, as instructed by God, had promised those on the ship, that no man's life should be lost; he afterwards said, when the sailors were about to flee out of the ship; 'except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved.' The promise and the predestination could not save them, if the predestinated means failed. And you will notice how the Bible, whenever it enters into any explanation of this matter, never leaves out the *means*. 'God hath chosen us in Christ, before the foundation of the world, *that we should be holy, and without blame before him in love*; having predestinated us *unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself*, according to the good pleasure of his will.' He hath not merely chosen us to heaven; but, 'that we should *be holy, without blame, in love*.' The means for heaven, and qualifications for heaven are as much decreed, as the heaven itself. Just so it stands in that passage in Romans, which I named to you once before: 'for whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate,' (not merely to heaven, but) '*to be conformed to the image of his Son*.' And more;—'whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called them he also justified; and whom he justified them he also

glorified.' Not a link is left out. The whole chain is perfect. Predestination reaches both means and ends together;—*never* the one, without the other. If your salvation is foreordained; your repentance, your faith, and holiness, and willing obedience to God are foreordained also. And so is your *willing* and prayerful use of all the means of eternal life. And this brings to mind one of your expressions, 'if I am to be saved I shall be saved, do what I will; according to this doctrine.' That is utterly false! This doctrine says no such thing. It says directly the contrary. It unites means and ends,—repentance, faith, prayer, humility, love, goodness, holiness, as means; and heaven, as the end. 'If I am to be saved I shall be, do what I may?' that is not our doctrine! You never heard it preached so! No man ever preached it so! No man ever believed that! Election does not dispense with the means of salvation, and *you* cannot dispense with them. You will repent willingly, 'in the day of God's power;' you will pray, you will flee to Christ, you will 'strive to enter in at the strait gate,' if you are going to be saved.—I cannot see for you the end. I cannot lift the curtain that hides eternity, and show you your place in the world of spirits; but I *can* see your duty here, the means of salvation, which ought to engage all your efforts. And, by the promise of the God of truth, I can know, that if

you employ the means as he bids you, you cannot fail of the end, eternal life. 'He that soweth to the spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting,' because God hath *foreordained* it shall be so.

"This predestinating of God is the most comfortable truth in the Bible. Strange that men should quarrel with it. There is no other truth, which carries with it a single gleam of comfort to shine on the wide world of futurity, and make man die in peace. *Everybody wants God to predestinate*; for everybody wants him to *promise*. Every promise of his *is* a predestination of his—it is only a determination and a commitment of himself to carry it out. God cannot promise without predestinating; and it is predestination therefore, which alone lights up a single gleam of gladness beyond the shores of time, to shine on that ocean eternity, where the immortal spirit shall soon be launched. In utter darkness must it launch there, if God does not predestinate. All the promises are blanks, if predestination is gone!

"You spoke to me once, about being troubled, that this doctrine makes man a mere machine. What a superficial, what a silly idea! If you are not a crazy man, you know you are free. You came here to-night freely. You will depart freely. You never acted and cannot act, but by the choice of your own mind. God decreed from all eternity, that you should be a free, moral agent, and you al-

ways have been so in all your sin. God has appointed the means of salvation, and solemnly, sincerely, and affectionately calls on you, to employ them voluntarily; while, as you are doing so, his predestinating promise throws the cheering of its light, over all the eternity before you. The doctrine of the divine decrees does not represent man as a mere machine. It is predestination, which secures him his freedom of will; and secures to him, by *predestinating promise*, the eternal rewards of evangelical obedience—‘sow to the spirit—reap life everlasting.’”

After some few minutes of thoughtful silence again, he said to me, more in the accent of serious inquiry, than of captiousness:—

“What is the use of praying?”

Said I, “What is the use of breathing? Breathing is the means to an end. Praying is the means to an end. Predestination does not secure life without breath, and does not secure eternal life without prayer.”

After another pause, he replied:—“If sin is foreordained, how can men be blamed for sinning?”

“Because they *choose* to sin,” said I. “They sin willingly. They know it. And they *know* they are blamable, as well as they know anything. God foreordained they should be blamable if they sinned.”

Another pause ensued. Finally, he said to me:

“*I cannot understand this thing?—Is it not more correct to say, that God foreknows everything, than to say he foreordains everything?*”

“No; not so much so; if you intend by this, to make foreknowledge mean anything *less* than foreordination. What is knowledge? It is the ascertainment or recognition of some certainty, some reality. All knowledge is founded on certainty. It cannot be *foreknown*, that anything shall take place, unless it is *certain*, that the thing shall take place. What has *made* that certainty? If it is *God*, who has made it; then he is a foreordaining God. If it is *not* God, who has made it, then there is something above him, (*fate*, or something else,) and he is God and Governor no longer! Then, he has no right to *promise*—he can, at most, only *predict*. And then, we have nothing to thank him for, in time or eternity; and all gratitude, love and prayer become supreme foolishness! How can you utter a syllable of prayer, if God does *not* govern, if he does not control all the certainties which *can* be foreknown? But he does control. His decree has *made* the certainties, which his foreknowledge recognizes. It could *not* recognize, could not foreknow, if God had not foreordained.”

After a few moments, he rose from his seat with the declaration, “I have no more to say. I am glad I came here. I understand some things now,

which I never did before. But this is still a dark subject. I know I am a sinner, and yet I cannot see how I am to be blamed, if God foreordained it. You say he foreordained my free agency and accountability, and that I have sinned of my own choice. I suppose it is so. I know I act freely, for I feel it. But I am perplexed, and know not what to do."

"Do what God bids you," said I. "Obey the invitations of his grace. Flee to Christ and be saved."

He left me. I did not see him again, till about a month afterwards, when he called on me and told me he hoped, that he had been led to choose Christ, as the portion of his soul. He did not mention the subject of election, at all; till I asked him, how he had extricated himself from his troubles of mind in respect to it. His answer was memorable. Said he: "I dismissed it from my mind entirely. I found that my wicked, worldly heart was resorting to the doctrine of election, as *an excuse* for my not turning to God. It was nothing but an excuse to me, for my prayerlessness, my love of the world and all sin. But since I have had a hope in the mercy of God, I am glad that God reigns, as he pleases. Election troubles me no more. In my opinion, if a *man is reconciled to God, he will be satisfied with predestination.*"

He afterwards made a public profession of his

religion. He still lives, a communicant in the church. More than once, he has said to me; "your explanation settles everything, 'predestination is God's eternal purpose to rule his universe just as he does rule it.'"

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There is a mode of contending for the great doctrines of truth, which may almost be said to substantiate them and neutralize them, at the same time. Such doctrines are susceptible of demonstration: and for one purpose, the demonstration is often indispensable. And yet, this purpose is only semi-religious. It may be necessary to make full intellectual demonstration of doctrines, for the purpose of silencing cavils and scepticism, by showing, that Christianity can withstand all the assailments of argument and all the onsets of reasoning, which can possibly be brought to bear against her. There may be some benefit in this. But it is only the benefit of *defence*, or, at most, only *clearing the way*, in order to get at the position and real work of religion. That work lies far more in vanquishing depravity, than in enlightening the intellect.—By the stern and severe logic of reasoning, by carrying on a vigorous warfare of mere argumentation, it is quite a possible thing, to silence



every cavilling of captiousness, and compel the understanding of an unconverted man to acquiesce in the doctrinal truths of Christianity. And this is not to be undervalued. If we have silenced the battery of an opponent, we have taken one step towards getting him to cease from an open and avowed hostility. But this is a very different thing from taking a single step towards such a victory, as we wish to gain over him. We do not wish merely to silence and stop an enemy: we wish to convert him into a friend. We would have him *love* the truth; and not simply make to it a cold and constrained obeisance. He may, indeed, deem such an obeisance an honor to Christianity; but in reality, it is only a dishonor and disgrace. Christianity deserves something more. It is quite a possible thing, and quite a common one too, that the truths of God should be acquiesced in, while, at the very same moment, they are not realized. The acquiescence is little to the purpose, if that is all. It is not a living faith. And the most that can be said of it is, that it is a dead orthodoxy. Our main business with any doctrine of religion is not to prove it, but to proceed upon it—not to understand it, but to apply and employ it. No doctrine is ever revealed to us in the Bible for its own sake merely, or for our understanding of it merely. The great object lies beyond. Something should be *effected* by it. And if we regard

the doctrine itself as the end ; our contest in its behalf will be carried on with a very different spirit and managed in a very different manner from what would prevail, if our mind were fixed on the momentous and eternal design, for which the doctrine has been revealed to us. If we can induce any man to study for the sake of practice ; the end he has then in view will help him over many a difficulty. To have his end practical, is the very way to get right in the principle. And when we wage our warfare with him, as if the principle were the main thing ; we shall be apt to induce him to stop far short of his just landing place. It would be far better, to set him out in an honest, and earnest, and instant inquiry, about the way of his own salvation. That motive standing first, and being seconded by all the deep urgencies that fitly bear upon it ; there will be little danger of his failing to get right in his principles, if he prayerfully keeps the Bible before him. If he will attend to the duty, he will soon get right in the doctrine. But if he will only attend to the doctrine, he will be very apt to miss it, or misunderstand it. Engaged in an honest and earnest attempt after salvation, he will rise above all mere scholarship, as he aims to find out where the truth lies. He will discover often what the truth *must* be, in order to meet the necessities of his own nature. He will ask God to teach him, and God

will honor the asking. And thus, not studying the truth in captiousness, but in candor—not in curiosity but in carefulness—not in pride and prejudice, but for practice, and for a permanency as durable as immortal life; he will both avoid the fogs which would obscure one half of it, and the counteraction which would neutralize the other half: For there will always be fog over every item of God's truth when it is *not* studied for the heart; and there will be counteraction from the heart itself to make void even all its enlightening virtue.—And besides all this, there are things not a few, among the doctrines of God, to which we shall labor in vain to make a sinner reconciled, until he is reconciled to God himself. If he is led truly to realize the necessities of his own nature; he will lose half his objections and sink half his difficulties. If he becomes reconciled to God in Jesus Christ; the other half will not trouble him much longer.

## THE BROWN JUG



IN the course of my pastoral visits, I called upon a man who was a member of my congregation, a farmer, between fifty and sixty years of age, a plain man, accustomed to daily labor. He was not a communicant, and I had no reason to think him to be a pious man. He was a regular attendant upon the religious services of the Sabbath; but I had never seen him in any religious assembly at any other time. He was regarded as a respectable man, I believe, in all respects. His wife was a pious woman, whom I had sometimes conversed with, and who had expressed to me her anxiety in regard to the religious state of her husband. He had been for so many years living under the means of grace, without being led to repentance and faith in Christ; that she was afraid his mind had settled down upon some ruinous error, or into a strange stupidity, so that he never would become a Christian. She said she

had often talked *to* him on the subject of his religious duty ; but he seldom entered into any free conversation upon it ; indeed, “he would say almost nothing at all about himself.” He would *hear* what she had to say, without any opposition, and with apparent willingness ; but he seldom made any reply, except to make some general acknowledgment of the importance of the subject. He had a family of children, the most of whom had already arrived at the years of manhood, and none of them manifested any disposition to obey the gospel in spirit and in truth. They were a moral and industrious family. The sons were much like their father, with the exception, that they less frequently were seen at church. The family resided some distance from my residence, and I had not known them very intimately, except the mother, as the rest of the family were usually absent in the field, when I called at their house.

Before the time to which I refer, I had never found this man at home ; nor had I been able to converse with him at all in reference to his religious duty. Soon after I entered the house, his wife retired from the room, and left me alone with him. I immediately addressed him on the subject of religion. He appeared candid and solemn. I found that he had no hope in Christ. He said that religion had, for many years, appear-

ed to him as a solemn and important duty. He wished he was a Christian. He said he was fully sensible, that he was a sinner in God's sight, and was exposed to his righteous justice. He referred to the sermons which he heard from Sabbath to Sabbath; and said it was a wonder to him, that they did not influence him more. But he supposed that he had "little true conviction of sin," and little sense of his real condition, or he should be a different man.—In this manner he spake of himself very freely, for a long time.

He appeared to me to be a man of respectable mind, rather slow in thought and in his sensibilities, but of sound judgment, and of some discrimination.

I urged him to give his instant and prayerful attention to his salvation; but he did not seem inclined to yield to my solicitation. I pressed it upon him strongly. I recited to him the promises of God, made to them that seek him; and the threatenings of God against the neglecters of salvation. Still he appeared unmoved. I then concluded to put together, in a manner adapted to his cast of mind, some of the most urgent appeals that I could think of. I commenced. Said I:—

“You are already somewhat advanced in life. Your remaining years will be few. You have no time to lose. You have lost enough already. If you do not become a follower of Christ soon, you

never will. You have a family of children. You have never set them an example of piety. You have never prayed with them as you ought to have done. Your neglect goes far to destroy all the influence which their mother might have over them. They copy your example. God will hold you accountable for a father's influence. You may be the cause of their ruin, because—”

“That often troubles me,” said he, (interrupting me in the middle of what I designed to say.)

“It *ought* to trouble you. It is a serious matter, for a father to live before his sons without acknowledging God, without prayer, without hope, just as if he and they had no more interest in the matter of religion than the beast, whose ‘spirit goeth downward to the earth.’”

“Yes, indeed it is,” said he. “And I am now getting to be an old man, I wish I could get religion.”

“You *can*. The whole way is clear. God's word has made it so.”

“I *will* begin,” said he, emphatically. “But I wish you would make a prayer with us. I will call in Mrs. E—— and the boys.”

He immediately called them.

After my saying a few words to each of them, and briefly addressing them all, we knelt together in prayer. As we rose from our knees, he said to his children, very solemnly :—“Boys, I hope this

visit of our minister will do us all good. It is time for us to think of our souls." I left them.

The next Sabbath they were all in church. At the close of the morning service I had some conversation again with the father. He appeared to be honestly and fully determined to "deny himself, take up his cross and follow Jesus Christ."

He continued very much in this state of mind for some months, sensible of his need of Christ to save him, and prayerful for divine mercy. I saw him and conversed with him many times. He did not appear to make any progress either in knowledge or sensibility. He did not go back; but he was stationary. He prayed in secret. He prayed in his family. He studied his Bible. He conversed with me freely. He sought opportunity for conversation. Uniformly he appeared solemn and in earnest. But he found no peace with God, no hope in Christ. Evidently he was in deep trouble of mind.

As he was not a man of much cultivation of mind, I aimed to teach him the truth in the most plain and simple manner. I proved everything, and explained everything. It was all in vain. Months rolled on. He continued in the same state. It was impossible to discover or conjecture what kept him from Christ. His condition filled me with solicitude; but I studied it in vain.

I made inquiries about him among his friends



and neighbors, to learn if possible, his whole disposition and his character of mind. But I soon discovered, as I thought, that I knew him better than anybody else.

More than six months after he began to give his prayerful attention to his salvation, as I was riding towards his house, just at a turn in the road, where it wound round a hill, which hindered our seeing each other till we were close together, I suddenly met him. He was riding in his one-horse wagon towards the village. I stopped my horse to speak to him, and I thought he appeared disposed to pass on. But as the road was narrow, and I had stopped my carriage, the wheels of our vehicles almost touched each other, and he could not well get by. We had a long conversation, as we sat in our carriages, in that retired and romantic spot. But I discerned no change in his religious feelings. He was as determined, but as hopeless as ever.

At length my eye happened to rest on a brown jug, which would contain about two gallons, and which was lying on its side, under the seat of his wagon. The thought came into my mind, that he might be accustomed to the use of stimulating drinks, and that that might be an injury and a hindrance to him in his religious endeavors. I had never heard or suspected that he was an intemperate man. Probably the idea never would

have occurred to me that strong drink might be his hindrance, had I not been utterly unable to account for his stationary condition in respect to religion. I instantly resolved to speak to him on that subject. But it was an awkward business. I did not know how to begin. I would not insult him, and I did not wish to injure his feelings. He was an old man, near sixty—old enough to be my father. And to suggest the idea, that he might be guilty of any excess, would seem to be cruel and uncalled for. But I thought it my duty to make some inquiry. So I began :—

“ Mr. E., where are you going this morning ?”

“ I am going to the village—to the store.”

“ I see you have got a jug there, under your seat ; what are you going to do with that ?”

He cast his eye down upon it, a little confused, for an instant, as I thought ; but he immediately replied :—

“ I am going to get some rum in it.”

“ Are you accustomed to drink rum ?”

“ I never drink any, to hurt me.”

“ You never drink any, to do you any good.”

“ I have thought it *did*, sometimes. I do not drink much.”

“ Do you drink it every day ?”

“ No, not every day, commonly. We had none to use in the field, this year, in all our haying, till we came to the wet meadow ; when the boys said

we should get the fever, if we worked with our feet wet, and had nothing to drink."

"So you have used it, since that time. You carry it into the field, I suppose?"

"Yes; we commonly do, in haying and harvest."

"Well; at other times of the year, do you keep it on hand, in your house?"

"Yes; I always *keep* it. But it is only a little that I drink; sometimes a glass of bitters, in the morning,—or, when I am not well, and feel that I need something."

"Mr. E., when you are perplexed, annoyed, or in some trouble; do you never take a drink, on that account?"

"I am very apt to. It seems to keep me up."

"Well, now, just tell me: for a good many months back, since you have been troubled on the subject of religion, have you been accustomed to resort to it, 'to keep you up?'"

"Yes; at times. I feel the need of it."

"In my opinion, that is the *worst* thing, my dear friend, that you *could do!*"

"Why, I only drink a *little*, at *home*. I have not carried it into the field, except in haying time."

"So I understand it. But one question more: Have you not often, at home, when you have felt downcast in mind, on account of sin, taken a drink, *because* you felt thus troubled?"

“I believe I have done it sometimes. I cannot tell how often. I never thought much about it.”

I had become convinced by this time, that he was, at least, in danger; and that it was not at all an improbable thing, that his drinking just kept him from repentance. I told him so; and then began, with all my sagacity and power of persuasion, to induce him to quit all intoxicating drinks *forever*. At first, he appeared not to believe me at all. He heard me, just as if he had made up his mind, and did not care what I said. His eyes wandered carelessly around, over the fields and trees, and then turned upon his old horse, as if he was impatient to start on, and get out of the way of a lecture which he disbelieved. After a time, however, and while I was stating to him some facts within my own knowledge, to show the uselessness of strong drink, he became apparently interested in what I was saying. He listened, and I went on with my plea. As I explained the effect of intoxicating drink upon the mind, and upon the feelings, and the conscience of men, he hung down his head, and appeared to be lost in thought. After a while, as I kept talking, he cast a glance at his jug; then looked up; and then his eyes fell back upon his jug again. I kept reasoning with him; but he did not look at me any longer,—he did not appear to be thinking of what I was saying. He appeared rather to be

engaged in deep thought; and his eye often turned upon his jug. By-and-by he slowly reached down his hand, and took hold of it. With a very solemn countenance, and without saying a word,—(he had not spoken for half an hour,)—he placed the brown jug upon his knee. I talked on, watching his silent motions. He turned his head very deliberately around, one way and the other, as if he were looking for something; his eyes glancing here and there, as if he did not see what he desired. I kept on talking to him.

Just at the spot where we were, the road swept politely round a huge stone, or side of a rock, which rose about ten feet above the path; and as those who built the road could not get it out of the way, the path made rather a short turn round it. This rock was within three feet of his wagon. His eye fixed upon it, and then glanced back to the jug upon his knee. Then he looked at the rock, and then at his jug again, and then at me. And thus his eye continued to wander from one to another of these three objects, as if it could not get beyond them. At first, I was in some doubt which of the three was the most attractive to his eye,—the rock, the brown jug, or myself. But in a little time I noticed that his eye rested on the brown jug *longer* than on me. At length I was lost sight of altogether, (though I continued talking to him,) and his eye glanced backwards and

forwards, from the brown jug to the rock, and from the rock to the brown jug. All this time he maintained an unbroken silence, and I kept on with my lecture.

Finally he seized the poor jug by its side, wrapping the long fingers of his right hand half round it, and slowly rising from his seat, he stretched up his tall frame to its full length, and lifting the brown jug aloft, as high as his long arm could reach, he hurled it, with all his might, against the rock, dashing it into a thousand pieces. "*Whoa! whoa! whoa!*" (said he to the old horse.) "Hold on here. *Whoa! whoa!* Turn about here. *Whoa!* We will go home now."—The horse had suddenly started forwards, frightened at the clatter of the brown jug, and the pieces which bounded back against his legs and side. The start was very sudden; and as my long friend was standing up, it came near to pitch his tall figure out of the wagon backwards. However, he did not fall. As he cried "*whoa! whoa!*" he put back his long arm upon the side of the wagon, and saved himself. He soon stopped his old horse; and deliberately turning him round in the street, till he got him headed towards home, he put on the whip, and without saying a word to me, or even casting a parting look, he drove off like Jehu. I drove on after him as fast as I could; but I could not catch him. He flew

over the road. And when I passed his house, about a mile from the jug-rock, he was stripping off the harness, in a great hurry. We exchanged a parting bow, as I drove by; and I never spake to him about rum afterwards.

Within a single month from this time, that man became, as he believed, a child of God. His gloom and fears were gone; and he had peace, by faith in Jesus Christ.

About a month afterwards, as I passed the spot, where such a catastrophe came upon the jug, and where my long friend came so near to be toppled out of his wagon; I noticed that some one had gathered up some pieces of the unfortunate brown jug, and placed them high up, on a shoulder of the rock. I saw them lying there many times afterwards; and thought that my friend had probably placed them there, as an affecting memorial—He might have done a worse thing.

## THE HARVEST PAST;

OR, THE DYING UNIVERSALIST.



MORE than sixteen years have now passed away, since the occurrence, of which I am now to write, made its first impression upon me: but I am still unable to recall the scene to my mind, without the most painful emotions. There was something in that whole scene too horrible for description. And I would much rather, were I to consult my own feelings, pass it over in silence, and let a veil be drawn over it forever, than have the recollection revived by copying the notes made respecting it. But several of my friends have urged the publication; and I yield to their judgment.

I was hastily summoned to the bedside of a sick man, by the urgent request of his mother. He was yet a young man, I suppose about twenty-six years of age, was married, and the father of one little child. I had never spoken to him. I knew there was such a man, but I did not know him



personally. His mother, who was a communicant in the church, had often mentioned him to me ; and his wife, who was a woman of very serious turn of mind, though very modest and reserved, had sometimes mentioned to me her husband, in a manner that showed me, that his treatment of the subject of religion was a matter of sorrow to her. But I had no personal acquaintance with him. Whenever I had visited the family, he had either been absent from home, or intentionally kept himself out of my sight,—which, as I suppose, he had often done. Sometimes, but very rarely, I had seen him at church, not knowing, at the time, who he was. And I did not suppose he had ever been in church for years ; till, when I saw him on his sick bed, I recognized him as one whom I had seen in church, and had taken for a stranger. He was an industrious man, prosperous in his business, and as a man of the world, bore a good character.

His father was a Universalist, and the son had imbibed his principles. I had known this before. His mother had mentioned it to me, with much sorrow. She had also requested me to converse with the old man, her husband, and I had more than once attempted to do so ; but he very soon excused himself by pretending, that his business was urgent, and he could not spend the time. I had also known him to leave the house and go off

into the field, when he knew that I had called to see his family, and when he had good reason to suppose, that I would request to see him. I have no doubt that he did this, on purpose to avoid me. His son, who was now sick, had also, as I suppose, avoided me in the same manner. He still resided in the house with his parents, who had also another son, a lad about twelve years of age. These persons, with an infant child of the sick man, made up the whole household.

As I approached the house, I was startled at the groans of the sick man. I could hear them distinctly into the street. As I entered the door, his mother met me, calm in her deportment, but evidently in the most heart-rending distress. She looked the very image of woe. She briefly told me how her son was ; and it was very easy to perceive, that she expected he would die. She did not wish him to know, that I had come at her request. She had not told him that I was coming. But she desired me to go in immediately, and converse with him and pray with him.

As I entered the sick man's room, and as she called my name and told him that I had come to see him ; he cast a sudden look at me, appeared startled, and turned away his face towards the wall, without uttering a word—as if he regarded me with horror. I approached him familiarly and kindly, offered him my hand, which he seemed re-

luctant to take, and feeling his feverish pulse, aimed to soothe him, as much as I could.

He had been taken suddenly ill with a fever, accompanied with violent pain in the chest, back and head. He was in the most excruciating agony, tossing from side to side, and his groaning and shrieks would have pierced any heart. He was a large, robust man, and his whole appearance indicated a vigor of constitution seldom equalled. His gigantic frame was yet in its full strength, and as he writhed in his spasms of pain, I thought I had never seen such an instance of the power of disease. This man of might was shaken and tossed, like a helpless leaf.

When he became a little more quiet, I inquired about his sufferings, and aimed to soothe and encourage him, expressing the hope that he might soon be relieved. In an accent of intolerable agony, he exclaimed ;—“ *Oh ! I shall die ! I shall die !*”

“ I hope not,” said I, “ by this sickness. I see no reason why you should not get well. And I think the doctor will be able to relieve you in a few hours.”

“ The doctor has done what he could,” said he, “ my time has come ! I cannot live ! Oh ! I shall die !” And raising himself up suddenly, leaning for a moment upon his elbow, he threw himself back upon the bed and drew the cover-

ing over his face, holding it there with both his hands.

I again attempted to soothe his agitation, gently requesting him to be as quiet as possible, and assuring him I did not think, that the doctor regarded his case as hopeless. Whether he gave any attention to my words I could not tell; for he kept his head buried in the bed clothes, and firmly resisted the gentle attempts of his wife and his mother to remove them. In this manner he lay for several minutes, still groaning as in agony. I asked him several questions, but he made me no answer.

Thinking that he might perhaps feel embarrassed at my presence, after speaking to him for a few moments, I took my seat in another part of the room, and conversed familiarly with his wife and his mother, aiming to remove his embarrassment, if he had any, by proposing something for his relief, and by such an ease and familiarity, as should lead him to regard me as a friend. This had the desired effect. He gradually removed the bed-clothes from his burning face, and attentively listened to our conversation. With an imploring and despairing look, he stared at his wife, and then at his mother. Time after time, his fixed gaze was turned from the one to the other; but I noticed, his eyes never rested on me. He seemed to avoid looking at me. If his mother or his wife

spoke, his eyes would turn upon them at the sound of the voice ; but if he heard a word from me, he did not notice me at all.

I had retired from his bed-side and taken my seat by the window, as I thought that would be a more delicate mode, than to stand by him, at least for a few minutes. He became more composed, and entirely still. After he had uncovered his face and listened for a few minutes, I rose to approach him. His mother, anticipating my design, and as I thought sensible of his reluctance to speak to me, rose and approached him before me. Calling him gently by name, she told him, that I had come to see him, and inquired if he “ would not like to have me pray with him.” Instantly, stretching both his hands towards the heavens, he raised himself on his bed, and holding his hands still aloft, as far as he could reach, he uttered the single syllable, “ *oh !*” with a dreadfulness of accent and a prolongation of the sound, which made my blood curdle in my veins. His wife and mother turned pale—the former sinking into a chair from which she had just risen. This sudden and singular action of the sick man led me to believe he was in an agony of mind. It did not seem like the action of bodily distress. It was altogether different. Thinking it the best way to induce him to express his feelings to me, I inquired :—

“Has your pain returned?”

Still holding his hands aloft, and without looking at me, he exclaimed in a tone of horror, “oh! oh! oh!”

“Are you in great pain?” I asked.

Another groan was his only answer.

“I am sorry to find you so ill,” said I.

He uttered another groan—a dreadful shriek!

His wife sobbing aloud left the room.

I then said to him, “God is merciful. He is the hearer of prayer; and if you are”—

“*Oh!*” was the dreadful sound from his quivering lips which interrupted me; it was a shriek, which rang through the house; and every one of the family hurried into the room where he was. Among others was his little brother, who was the only one he seemed to notice. He glanced, once or twice, at him, and thinking he was about to speak to him, I remained silent. As he sat thus erect in his bed, with his hands stretched aloft to the utmost of his power, his eyes fixed on vacancy before him, and his lips uttering only his dreadful monosyllable, as a scream apparently of horror, he was the most pitiful object my eyes ever beheld.

“Shall I pray with you?” said I.

He flung himself back violently upon his bed, turned his face away from me towards the wall, and again drew the clothes over his head. We knelt by his bed-side, and continued some time in

prayer. He had not spoken to me at all. But it appeared to me, that his agony was quite as much mental as bodily; and I aimed to pray in such a manner, that he might be soothed and encouraged by the idea of the mercy of God towards sinners, through our Lord Jesus Christ. During prayer he remained entirely still; but I could distinctly hear his deep breathing, and feel the bed shake, as a long breath rushed from his lungs. I continued in prayer for some six or eight minutes, I suppose, longer than I should have done, had not this exercise appeared to quiet him, and had it not been the only mode, by which I appeared to be able to make any religious idea find access to his mind.

When we rose from our knees, his face was uncovered; and turning his eyes upon me, then upon his mother, then back upon me again, he seemed to be on the point of speaking to me, and I stood by him in silence. With a look and tone of decision, he exclaimed—as he fixed his eyes firmly upon me:—

“It will do no good to pray *for me*, sir.”

I waited for him to say more, but as he did not appear to be inclined to do so, I replied:—

“God is the hearer of prayer: he has encouraged us to pray to him: *he* has not said, that it will do no good to pray.”

“*My* day has gone by!” said he. “It is too late for me!—it is too late!”

“No, sir; it is *not* too late. If you want God’s mercy, you may have it. God himself says so: ‘Whosoever *will*, let him take the water of life freely.’ You ought to think of the death of Christ for sinners,—of the mercy of God.”

“*Mercy ! mercy !*” he vociferated; “that is what makes my situation so dreadful! I have despised mercy! I have scoffed at God! I have refused Christ! If God was only *just*, I could bear it. But now the thought of his abused mercy is worst of all! There is *no mercy* for me any longer! For years I have refused Christ! My day has gone by! I am lost! I am lost!”

“You think wrong,” said I, “God has not limited his invitations. Christ says, ‘Come unto me *all ye that labor and are heavy laden.*’”

“My day has gone by!” said he.

“No; it has *not*,” I replied, in a voice as firm as his own: “behold *now* is the accepted time—*now* is the day of salvation.”

“That is not for *me*!” said he: “I have had my time and lost it! I have spent all my life for nothing! I have been a fool all my days, and now I am dying! I have sought for nothing but this world! I have refused to attend to God, and now he has taken hold of me, and I cannot escape!” (The family, much affected, retired from the room.)

“You have time still to seek him, to repent



and flee to Christ. You have time *now—to-day*. The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin. Pray to God. You may be saved."

"You think so," said he; "but I know *better*—I *know* better! It is too late! I am dying, sir!"

"Christ accepted the dying thief," said I. "God is so rich in mercy, that he pardons sinners at the eleventh hour."

"The eleventh hour is past!" said he. "This is the *twelfth* hour! God's time of vengeance has come! I have had my time, and lost it! It is all gone! I have loved the world only, and now I must leave it! Oh! fool! fool! What is the world to me? Oh! how could I live so? I have been a fool all my days!"

He uttered these desponding expressions in the most firm and decisive tone. And as I was aiming to convince him of the mercy of God, and referring to the scriptures, all I could say did not seem to weigh a feather with him.

His wife and his mother hearing our conversation, had returned to the room, and seated themselves, in silence, at a distance from his bed. And just as he was uttering some exclamations about his love of the world, and his folly, his father entered the room, and hearing his expressions for a little while, he approached the bed, saying to him:—

“Why, you need not feel so bad: you have never done any hurt to anybody.”

“*Don't talk to me, father,*” said he, in a tone of authority, or rather of hatred and anger. “You have been my worst enemy! You have ruined me! You led me to disobey God, and neglect the Bible! You led me into sin when I was only a little boy! You took me off to fish and hunt, Sundays, and stroll around the fields, when mother wanted me to go to church. You told me there was no hell, that all men would be saved. And *don't come here now to try to deceive me any longer! You have done your work! You have been my ruin!*—Oh! if I had minded mother, and not *you*, I should not have come to such an end!—Don't cry, mother, don't cry so,”—(he heard her sobbing.) “You are a good woman: you have nothing to be afraid of. God will take care of you. Don't cry so. Oh! I would give a *thousand worlds*, if I owned them, to have your religion—or any part of it—or anything like it! But I am lost! I am lost!—You told me, father, there was no hell, and I tried to believe it. I joined you in wickedness, when I knew better. I have laughed at hell; and now hell laughs at me! God will punish sinners! He has taken hold of me, and I cannot get out of his hands!”

His father attempted to say something to him; but the son would not allow him to finish a single

sentence. The moment he began to speak, the son exclaimed :—

“ *Quit, father ! Don't talk to me !* Your lies cannot deceive me any longer ! You have ruined my soul !—Where is my brother ?”

As he made this inquiry, his wife rose, and coming near to the bed-side, replied :—

“ He is out in the garden, I believe. What do you want of him ? shall I call him ?”

“ Yes ; call him. He is young. I want to tell him not to believe what father says to him—not to be influenced by him. He will lead him to hell. Now, when he is young, I want him to know what Universalists say is false. I don't want *him* to be led into sin, as father led me. I want him to believe what mother says to him ; and read the Bible ; and pray, before praying is too late ; and not break the Sabbath day ; and attend church ; so that he may not die as I am dying.”

His father, looking at me, remarked :—

“ He has had so much fever and pain, that his mind is not regular.”

“ Father ! *I am no more crazy than you are !* You need not deceive yourself with that notion ! But you are *not* deceived. You know better ! You *try* to deceive yourself, just as you try to believe there is no hell. You pretend, that all men will be saved ; but you don't believe it. You led me to talk in the same way, and laugh at the

warnings in the Bible against sinners. When I was a little boy, you began to lead me into sin! Don't come here to torment me with your falsehoods now, when I am dying!"

At this moment, his little brother, about twelve years of age, whom he had asked for, entered the room. Calling him by name, and looking tenderly upon him, vastly different from the look he had just bent upon his father, he said:—

“Come here, my brother. I am going to die, very soon; and I want to tell you something. I want you should remember it after I am dead. You are young now, and I want you to begin to live in the right way. I have been a very wicked man. Don't do as I have done. Read the Bible. Never swear, or take God's name in vain. Always go to church, Sundays. Always mind what mother says to you. Father will lead you into a very bad way, if you are not very careful. He led me into sin, when I was a little boy, like you. He has led me to ruin, because I was fool enough to yield to him. If I had done as mother wanted me to, I might have died in peace. She is a good woman.—Don't cry, mother, do not cry so:” (sobbing aloud she left the room:)—“If father ever says there is no hell for the wicked, don't believe him. There is an awful hell! Remember that I told you so, when I was dying! If father ever says, that all men will be saved, never believe a word

of it. The wicked will be turned into hell! Dear boy! It is a pity that he should be led to ruin. Never believe what the Universalists say. Believe your mother; and don't let father lead you into sin. Be a good boy. If I could live, I would tell you more another time. But I must die!"

The young brother had stood by him weeping, manifestly struggling hard to control his emotions, till entirely overcome he cried aloud in a burst of grief, and rushed out of the room.

While he was talking to his little brother, the father listened for a time, apparently unmoved, and then with a sort of stealthy tread went out.

It was one of the most affecting scenes. His mother, who had returned again to the room, his wife and myself, subdued to tears, sat for some time in silence. It was enough to melt a heart of rock. But the sick man never shed a tear. I had hoped, when he spake so tenderly to his mother, and when he began to talk so affectingly to his little brother, that his own sensibilities would have been excited in a tender manner, and be a means of overcoming the stern and dreadful stubbornness of his resolute despair. But there was none of this. His voice never faltered. His eye never moistened. His burning brow never quivered.

I again attempted to converse with him; but he manifested no disposition to hear me. He did

not even reply to any question. Recollecting how he had appeared a little while before, when I prayed by his side, I proposed to him, that I would make a short prayer with him, before I left him.

“Not here!” said he, firmly. “Pray in the other room, if you wish to pray. Do not pray here. I cannot pray. And I will not pretend it. I am beyond praying. My day is gone by! The harvest is past! Mother, I wish you would go into the other room, if you want to pray.”

We retired to another room, where we found his father, who had probably heard all that he had said. The old man appeared to be unaffected. And when I spake to him about the necessity of preparation for death, he seemed as indifferent as a stone. As the rest of us kneeled in prayer, he sat looking out of the window.

Before I left the house, I returned again to the room of the sick man. He appeared very uneasy and restless, but I did not think his pain was bodily. The doctor came in, felt his pulse, asked some questions, prescribed for him; and saying he thought he would “be better to-morrow,” left him.

“I shall be *dead*, to morrow,” said he, firmly, without changing his position, or appearing to regard the presence of any one.

Briefly assuring him again of the mercy of God, the readiness of Christ to save him, and exhorting

him to prayer, I bade him good-bye, (to which he made no answer,) and left him.

After I was gone, (as I afterwards learnt,) he remained very much silent, seldom even replying to any question, but, from time to time, tossing from side to side, and groaning aloud. His father brought him a paper, (as I was told,) which he wished him to sign as his will. He refused to sign it. Again the father brought it. It was read to him. Witnesses were called. He refused to sign it. "Father," said he, fiercely, "you have led me into sin, into the snares of the devil; you have ruined me forever! And now you want me to sign that paper, to take away from my wife and child all their support! *You know* it would not be right for me to sign it. Take it away!"

Repeatedly during the night, his father urged him to sign that will. He steadily refused to do so, and sometimes stated the reasons for his refusal. But at last, the son signed it, wearied out with the ceaseless importunity, or what is more probable, in a moment of insanity, unconscious of what he was doing. Be this as it may, the will was set aside afterwards by the court.

Early the next morning I returned to see him. The doctor had just left him, still giving his friends encouragement that he would recover, though he said he had "not expected to find him so bad as he was, but his symptoms were not unfavorable."

I suppose he formed his opinion without regard to the state of the sick man's mind; and on this ground I have not a doubt his opinion was right.

As I entered the room, I was struck with his altered appearance. He looked ten years older than when I left him, the previous afternoon. He was evidently fast approaching his end. His voice was sunken and husky—his breathing short and labored—his strength diminished—his look wild and delirious. He talked incoherently, his words running upon all strange matters by turns, as I understood had been the case with him at times, through the whole night.

He had manifestly some lucid intervals. In one of them I attempted to converse with him, but he did not appear to regard me at all. I offered to pray with him, and he answered:—

“Prayer comes too late now—the harvest is past!” He immediately turned himself on the bed with a distressing shriek, and lay with his face towards the wall; and a moment afterwards his lips were vocal with delirious ravings! I may not here record what he said in his delirium; but it may be remarked, that his thoughts seemed to run much upon his father, in an unhappy manner.

I stayed in his room for a long time. When he seemed to have a lucid interval, I conversed with his mother and wife, hoping that he might attend



to what was said, as he had apparently done the day before ; but he did not seem to notice it.

I particularly noticed his manner towards those who were around him, as I had done the day before. When his mind was not wandering, he appeared the same as on the previous day. He would not speak to his father, but with great reluctance, and as if he detested him. He appeared unwilling to have him in his presence. He would follow him with his eye, as he came into the room or retired from it, with a look of hatred. Towards his mother, his manner was entirely different. He spoke to her affectionately. He would gaze upon her for minutes together, with a look of tenderness and intense interest. If he saw her in tears, he would sometimes strive to comfort her. He was manifestly affectionate towards his wife and his little brother. His eyes would rest upon *them* with a look of fondness, but fix upon his *father* with the look of a fiend.

After I had retired from his room for a few minutes, we returned again, and I found him sinking so fast, that I thought it my duty to tell his mother and his wife, that I did not believe he would live out the day. They seemed surprised, and immediately sent for the doctor. When he came he found him dead ! He had survived about three hours after I left him, growing weaker and

weaker till he breathed his last, with the words of delirium upon his lips.

“ When the harvest is past, and the summer is gone,  
And sermons and prayers shall be o'er ;  
When the beams cease to break, of the sweet Sabbath morn,  
And Jesus invites thee no more ;  
When the rich gales of mercy no longer shall blow,  
The gospel no message declare ;—  
Sinner, how canst thou bear the deep wailings of wo !  
How suffer the night of despair ?

When the holy have gone to the regions of peace,  
To dwell in the mansions above ;  
When their harmony wakes, in the fulness of bliss,  
Their song to the Saviour they love ;—  
Say, O sinner, that livest at rest and secure,  
Who fearest no trouble to come,  
Can thy spirit the swellings of sorrow endure ;  
Or bear the impenitent's doom !  
Or bear the impenitent's doom !”

It does not belong to us to decide upon the condition of this departed man ;—but who would wish to die like him ? “ Let me die the death of the righteous ; let my last end be like his.”

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I have no reason to suppose, that the religious character of that father was ever essentially altered. At the funeral of his son he appeared

very much affected, and I hoped that his affliction and the serious exercises of that solemn and tender occasion would have an abiding and salutary impression upon his mind. But when I visited him the next day, I found him occupied with the papers of his son, and the will which he had induced him to sign on the night before his death; and though his wife expostulated with him against such an employment at such a time, he still kept on. And afterwards till the day of his death, I never found any reason to believe that he ever became a different man.

But it was not so with that little brother, to whom the dying man gave such a solemn and affecting caution. The boy seemed to have treasured every word of it in *his heart*. He was very respectful and obedient to his father, in all things but one. In all that pertained to religion he was as fixed as a rock, against his father's influence. He would instantly leave him, if his father uttered a word on that subject. He would not be induced to neglect church or violate the Sabbath, by any influence or authority of his father. Without explanation or words of any sort, he would quietly disobey him, when he thought his requirements were contrary to the law of God; while in all other things he was most respectful and obedient towards him. I knew him well for years. His Bible and his mother were his counsellors; the

Sabbath was his delight. He sought the Lord, and found him. And when giving me an account of the manner in which his mind had been influenced in respect to his salvation, he referred to what his dying brother had said to him. But he made this reference with evident reluctance and pain, weeping in bitterness of spirit. I have every reason to believe, that both he and the widow of his departed brother are the children of God, through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

## DOCTRINES AND DEATH.



A FEW years after I was settled in my congregation, a family moved into the place from another section of the country, and took a seat in our church. The husband and wife both brought letters of dismissal from the church where they had lived, and became members of our church. I soon became acquainted with them, and much interested about them. They were little more than thirty years of age, active, wealthy, and of good education, had seen much of the world, were energetic in all that they undertook; and I thought them capable of doing much good. I therefore took the more pains to know them well. They entered very readily into our plans and ways, and their aid was beneficial to us.

But it soon became manifest to me, that the wife was not well satisfied. She did not much complain, or find fault, so far as I know; but many of her expressions, uttered in conversation

with myself and others, indicated a dissatisfied mind. Whether this dissatisfaction was personal towards myself, or had reference to the congregation, I could not, at first, even conjecture. She had been educated in her youth, in another denomination, whose forms of worship differed from our own in some degree; and I deemed it probable, that she did not feel quite at home among us. I respected her the more on this account. I did not think it would be wise to let her know, that I perceived her dissatisfaction; but I determined rather to be faithful and friendly to her, and let her dissatisfaction wear off, as I trusted it would. She had never mentioned it to me, and if I should mention it to her, I thought it quite likely that she would throw off all restraint, and be confirmed in her unhappy dislike. I therefore, always treated her just as if she were satisfied with me, and with her fellowship in the church.

As time passed on, I became more and more convinced, that her dislike had respect to myself. I aimed to conjecture what it was in me, that did not suit her; but I could form no opinion. She might dislike me, as a man; or she might dislike me, as a minister: I could not tell which. Or her dislike, on either one point, might lead to dislike, on the other. But as she never disclosed her feelings to me, I never disclosed my knowledge of them to her.

But after she had remained with us about three years; I supposed that I had discovered clearly the grounds of her dissatisfaction. She did not like some of my preaching; indeed, very little of it suited her. I could at times perceive this, when she was listening to my sermons. And in conversation with her, when she adverted very modestly to my preaching, and expressed her opinion, that some particular sermons were likely to do good, and that she did not believe some others were so appropriate, I perceived, that she disapproved of the greater part of my sermons. She disliked those, which she called "doctrinal." Such themes as human sinfulness, divine sovereignty, justification by faith in Christ simply, regeneration not by baptism, but by the Holy Spirit aside from baptism, the unbending nature of the law of God, the justice of God in the condemnation of sinners, and the obligation resting upon sinners to repent, especially because God proffers to them the aids of the Holy Spirit—these doctrines did not appear to be acceptable to her. My mind apologized for her dislike, by the fact, that she had been educated in another denomination, and by the recollection of the strength of our early preferences. However, as she had not *complained* of my preaching, but had only spoken in the way of inquiry and suggestion; all I could do was, first, to refer to the Bible, and show, that in my preaching I had

not given to such subjects a greater proportionate regard, than the divine writers had ; and then, to explain to her, how such subjects were the most important and practical of all possible things, because they were the *facts in the case*, because they *addressed men's hearts*, and laid the foundation of religion *there*, in the heart's experience of God's truth, by the power of the Holy Spirit. This explanation appeared to cut her to the heart. But she did not complain.

By many things in her appearance and conversation, I was convinced, after a time, that some change was taking place in her religious views and feelings. The nature of the questions she sometimes put to me, about experimental religion especially, convinced me of this. She had never told me so, however, in any very plain manner ; and I did not deem it best to make any inquiries about it. But she became a personal friend to me very evidently, not only as a man, but especially as her minister. And she used to urge upon the attention of her friends, as I learned, the truths which I preached ; and used to urge them to "attend the church and listen to every word so as to understand." In this friendship and confidence, her dissatisfaction all gone, she continued to live in the church, manifestly a growing and happy believer, till the day of her death. The very doctrines, which she had disliked, became the delight



of her soul; and she often requested me to go to some other places which she named, and preach there the sermons which she had listened to at home; "for," says she, "the people there do not hear these truths, and do not know how precious they are. I did not use to hear them when I was there."

At one time, a friend of hers, a young person, had united with the denomination, to which she formerly belonged. But though this young person stood in such relation to her, that it would naturally have been expected, that such a profession of religion would have been made known to her at the time; yet it was kept a secret from her—she knew nothing of it, till some little time after her young friend had been to the communion. She then ascertained, that her own mother had advised the young person to this step. It grieved her much. She could not think it was right. She thought, that some stronger evidence of fitness, than her young friend possessed, was requisite for church-membership. In the pain of her heart, she spoke to the old lady about it: "Why, mother!" said she, "How *could* you advise it? I think it is just the way to deceive souls! You seem to suppose, that baptism and the church ordinances are everything! I thought you had learnt better! That is just the way you brought *me* up; and if I had not learnt better, I should

have been ruined forever! And now, you have just led this young creature astray; and I am afraid she will never find it out, till it is too late!" —This she told me herself with deep affliction and tears; and asked me, if she had said anything disrespectful, or what was wrong in such a case. She said, she wished to "honor her mother, but she could not avoid speaking, when she was so much afraid this poor young creature would be led to ruin!"

When she came to her last illness, I saw her often. Her sufferings were very great, continually. Her patience never forsook her, for a moment. She never uttered a single syllable of complaining—not a murmur escaped her; though her exceeding pain sometimes compelled her to shriek. As I visited her, from time to time, for conversation and prayer, she was accustomed to speak freely to me; and after I had left her, I used to write down some of her expressions, part of which I here transcribe.

About ten days before her death, I found her in the most excruciating agony. She said to me, "I am in great pain. I never knew, what pain was, before. But my God sends it; and I know it is good for me, or he would not bring it upon me, so dreadfully. I do not complain. I sometimes scream, because I cannot help it. But do not think me impatient, because I scream. If I could

avoid it, I am sure I would. I am afraid my friends will think me impatient, and think religion is not such a support as I tell them; but it is only my poor *body* that troubles me. My mind is at peace. Christ sustains me, or I could never endure this. And, as you have often told us in your sermons, that afflictions are benefits to God's children; I find it so now. Indeed, I can see now, as I look back, that, in all my life, God has given me my richest mercies, in the shape of crosses. Very often, I did not know it, at the time; but I know it now. I praise him for it all. He sustains me. I have dreadful pain, but I have precious peace. My Saviour makes good to me his promises, as you have so often assured us he would. I find now, that it is true. I believe it now, in a way that I never believed it before."

A day or two afterwards she said, "I am glad you have come. I want you to pray with me, and thank the Lord for his goodness. I am in no less pain, but I am supported wonderfully. I find, that I know a great many things about religion now, which I never understood before. You have taught us a great deal about the promises, and living by faith; and now, I know what it means. Faith is everything. It gives me patience. It gives me love; and leads my heart to rest. You have not taught us too much about it, nor said too much about Christ. He is all in all to me.

“When I have a little more strength as I hope I shall have, before I die; I want to say something to you about yourself. I can’t say much now. If you will come in, another time, when you can; I will say more. I want to tell you something about your preaching. It was a long time, before I could be reconciled to your way. I did not like it. I was blind, and did not understand why you should preach so much about Christ, and the atonement, and our evil hearts of unbelief, and the Holy Spirit, and sovereign grace to justify us, and prayer. But I understand it all now. And I find it all true; as I hope to be able to tell you more particularly, at another time.”

The next day when I went in, she seemed, after a little while, to muster her remaining strength, and gather up her thoughts for what she called “something in particular.” She said to me, (speaking with great effort, and slowly and solemnly;) “I wish to thank you for instructing me as you have done, out of the scriptures. I hope you will continue to press upon your people, as you are accustomed to do, the Bible itself. The forms of religion are nothing. Since I have been sick, it has been a great comfort to me to go to the Bible. I can remember the chapters I have heard you read in the church, and the texts, and the doctrines I have heard you preach; and now they comfort me. Many a time when I have

gone to church, I should have been pleased, I suppose, to hear you preach some fanciful sermon, as some ministers I know do; but you would come out with some scripture doctrine, and urge us to examine the Bible, and see if these things were not so; and it has done me a great deal of good. I think it has been the means—one great means, of fixing my faith just on the scriptures, so that now I am comforted by them. If you had not done so, I never should have had this strong faith in my God. I might have got it, perhaps, in some other way, if you had not preached so, and insisted upon the scriptures so much; but it seems to me that I never should. And I want you to keep on so, and God will bless you in it. I want you to continue to urge upon the people, as you used to, the Bible truths and doctrines. They will not all like it any better than I did at first; but I hope the Lord will instruct them to hear his great truths. They have done me good,—great good. They comfort me now. Some ministers talk about other things, such as the lives of men; but that does not do me any good, except the lives of those mentioned in the Bible. Your preaching led me to examine God's word, to see if the things you preached were so there; and I found them so. I thank you for it all. I hope you will urge it still upon the people to turn to the Bible, and find the truths you preach there.

The Bible is enough. It is precious to me. It contains all I want. I hope you will not be discouraged, if the people do dislike, some of them, your humbling, solemn way. Keep on. They may learn better, as I did. And then they will have precious promises, and precious doctrines to lead them, and not care about forms and ceremonies, or speculations and fancies."

On another occasion, when I saw her, she spoke of herself. "I am to die very soon; and I am ready to die. I did not think, last night, that I should be here, to-day. I slept a little. This dreadful pain had exhausted me; and when I waked up, I was sorry to find myself here. I hoped I should have been with Christ. I would not be impatient; but I hope God will take me away soon. I do not fear death. Some people speak of it as a dark valley; and so I suppose it is, of itself. I believe the scriptures call it so. But it is no dark valley to *me*. It is all light. The promises shine on it. They shine beyond it. Christ is with me, and I trust *him*."

The day but one before she died, she said to me:—"I took the Bible to read this morning, and I came upon the place where Paul speaks of being 'clothed upon with our house which is from heaven.' It led me to think of what I am just coming to. I hope I have got almost home; and I trust I shall not be disappointed. I am now

ready to go. God has been very merciful to me, keeping my mind in this perfect faith and peace. When I was first taken sick, I had been in a cold, backsliden state ; and I murmured, for some time. But I am fully satisfied now. My trials have been good for me,—all good. God does all for me that I want, through my Lord Jesus Christ. *He* has brought me to these sufferings, and I thank him,—I thank him for it all. He has been with me, and kept me full of peace and joy. I have settled all my worldly affairs ; and I have nothing now to do, but to think of God and heaven. I have given up all.

“ I have been surrounded with kind friends,—nothing but kindness all the time ; and their kindness overcomes me, and brings these tears. I have found it difficult to be reconciled to part with them, and give them all up ; but I have been able to do it satisfactorily. Some of them I hope to meet in heaven. (She mentioned their names.) They are professors of religion ; and I hope true Christians. But what grieves me most of all is, that I must leave some of them, not knowing that we shall ever meet again ! (She mentioned their names.) They are not professors, and I suppose are not Christians ! I do not know as I shall ever see them again ! This grief overwhelms me ! I don't know what will become of them !—But grace is all-sufficient,—I leave them with God.

“I have always felt that a Christian ought to die rejoicing. In dying we are going home to our Saviour. Christ is with me all the time, and gives me peace,—sweet peace to my soul;—and I hope he will not leave me in the last hour. I trust he will not. I have been afraid my faith would fail then, when I come to the waves of Jordan; but I trust *him*, and I am happy to think I have got so near home.”

Such were some of her death-bed expressions.—Her joy increased as she neared her end, till it became the most triumphant and rapturous exultation; and she died with the words of joy and ecstasy literally upon her lips:—an *unfinished word* of praise and exultation being the last word she attempted to utter. It was commenced on earth, and finished in heaven.

THE END.





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